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No. 86.

Dick Lighthouse Around the World.

CHAPTER I.

A DEALER IN NOTIONS.

THE time passed very heavily for Mr. Sharley and his friends.

In proof of his statement he displayed the dollars he had received.

"What a lark," said Messiter. "Dick deserves half the posh for his pluck."

"He shall have the whole if it will be any good to him," replied Hopkins.

"Did you ever know any one to whom money was no good?" asked Messiter.

"Well, as a showman, I must say I never did," said Hopkins with a grin.

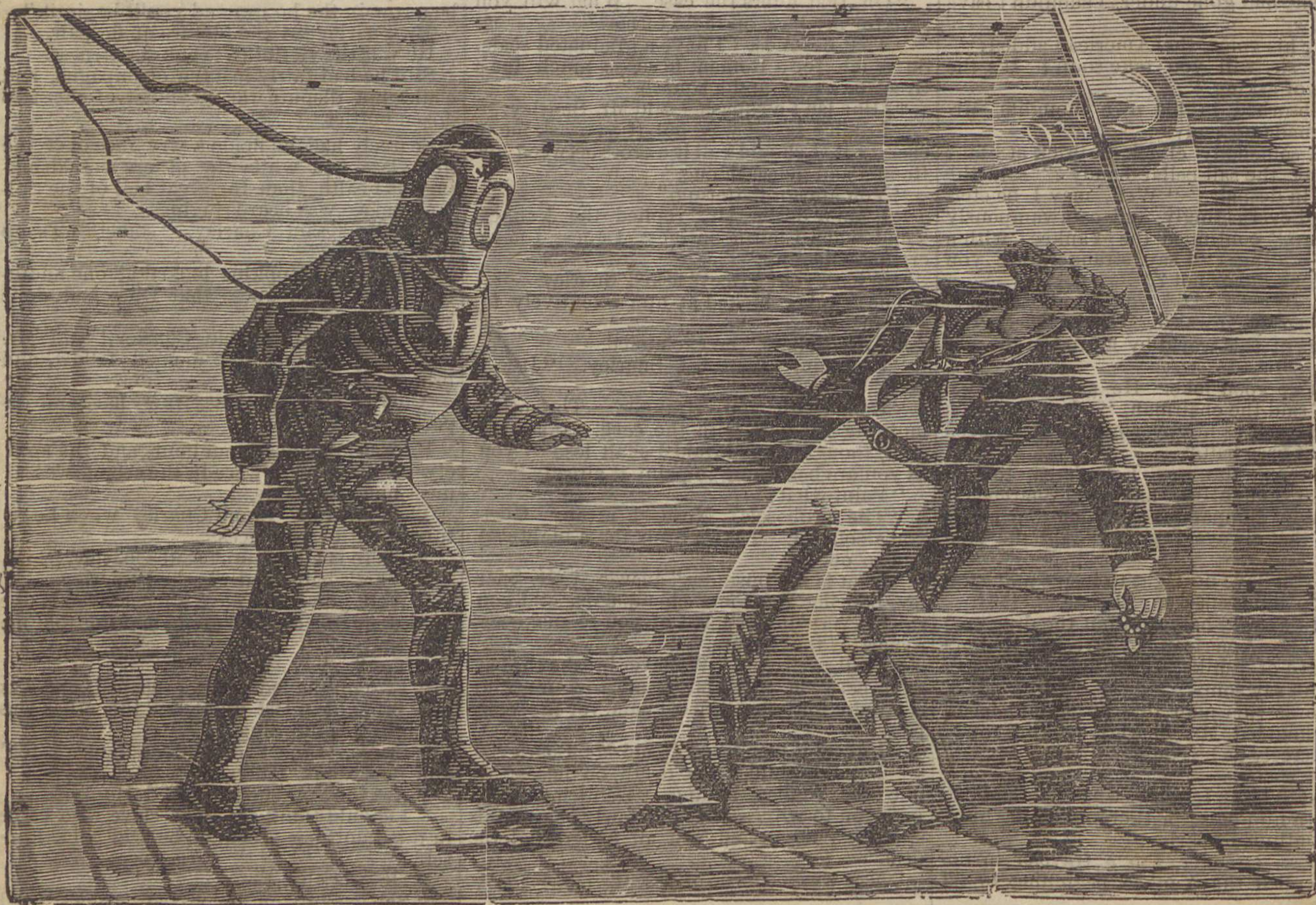
"Not very lively when you hadn't the coin to pay," remarked Messiter.

"In that case I did the dignified, and had a supreme disdain for filthy lucre, as the poet calls it, though I should have been glad enough to have laid my forks on it myself."

"Mr. Sharley you don't talk," exclaimed Messiter.

"I can't, my boy," was the doleful reply.

"He's thinking of his poor Polly."



"Seizing the jewel in his hand, he fell unconscious at Dick's feet."

Hopkins came back and told him that he had succeeded in selling Dick as a female slave, and that, his disguise not being guessed at even, he had seen him conveyed into the Sultan's palace.

"I should think not."

"As a matter of dry fact," continued Hopkins, still laughing, "it was always a sight to me to see the actors come up on treasury day to get their screws."

"So am I, Master Harry," said Hopkins. "She's my poor Polly as much as his, and I do feel dreadful funky about her now."

"You're a nice pair, both of you, not to think of Lighthouse as well," said Messiter.

"I do," answered Snarley. "I honor that brave boy for his courage. But perhaps we shall never see them more."

"I'll bet Dick will pull through. He's like an eel, he'll wriggle out of anything," replied Messiter.

A bell rang down stairs.

"Dinner," said Messiter. "Come and grub."

"I can't eat," said Snarley.

"Can't I! I should like to see what would put me off my feed."

"I'll drink something," continued Snarley.

"Come on, then. What's your lotion? Put a name to it, and I'll stand a corpse-reviver," added Messiter.

The two men followed him to the dining-room, where about half-a-dozen others were assembled.

An American had taken the chair, with the usual enterprise of his race.

"Now, my gay and gallant citizens," he exclaimed, "who says soup?—cos I'm hungry, and want to pitch in; though I guess, as I'm boss, I haven't got the first start."

Everybody answered in the affirmative except Mr. Snarley, who sat absorbed in thought at the extremity of the table.

"You, sir," cried the Yankee, "for the third time, do you vote for soup, or is fish your platform?"

There was no answer.

"I calculate the critter's either deaf or dumb," said the Yankee.

"He's lost his wife," remarked Messiter.

"Has he? I guess that would make me tarnation glad. I've got one; but she's to home, in Boston, Mass., and if they cabled me that she had gone under, I shouldn't cave in, no how."

Raising his voice, the American added:

"You, sir, will you take soup? It's the last time of asking."

Still absorbed in his own thoughts, Mr. Snarley made no reply.

"Will somebody chuck a brick at him? Who's got the salt-cellar handy?" said the Yankee, in despair. "Well, may I be eternally, and everlastingly, and catawampously chawed up," continued the Yankee, "with a scream; adding: 'I say, stranger, are you agwine for soup or not?'"

"Eh?—What?—Did you speak to me?" asked Snarley, awaking to the reality of the things of this world by a prod in the ribs from Messiter.

"That's a good joke. He asks if I spoke to him," said the chairman, "when I've been making myself as hot over him as if I'd been playing at base ball."

"Ah! thank you, no. I don't eat to-day; I'm rather thoughtful," answered Snarley.

"Pleasant companion on a long journey, if you like that always, I guess," said the Yankee.

"Sir, you have no right to insult me! Eat your soup and respect my silence."

"Chain up, old hoss, and put the drag on," answered the American. "I reckon I don't care a yard of Bunker's Hill for a Britisher who won't say soup!"

"Who is this man that he should insult me?" demanded Mr. Snarley, looking round him as fiercely as he could.

No one spoke.

"What is he? I know what I should call him—a—humbug; a thorough-going humbug!" continued Snarley.

"I guess, stranger, I'm a traveler in notions," replied the Yankee, beginning to eat his soup.

There was a merry twinkle in his eye, as if he had selected Mr. Snarley as the victim for a joke.

"Notions, sir?" said Snarley; "what may that ambiguous phrase mean?"

"Am—I beg your pardon," said the Yankee, politely.

"Ambiguous."

"Ah! I guess I don't know him."

"Uneducated brute! But this is the penalty of mixing in promiscuous company."

"Pro—what did you say?" again asked the Yankee.

"Promiscuous, sir. That means mixed. Ambiguous is doubtful. Go to school again, sir," answered Snarley, severely.

"Wall, raise my hair," said the Yankee; "the gentleman's as good as a dictionary, and I am obliged to him. I shouldn't mind traveling with him as a learned show; he'd draw in the country district."

"Notions?" reflected Mr. Snarley. "What are notions?"

"That depends. I guess wooden nutmegs are notions, so are glass beads for the benighted savages of Africa. So are Amerikane cloth and diseased donkeys," replied the Yankee.

"What may be the nature of the peculiar notions in which you now travel?" asked Snarley.

"Noses," was the reply.

"What, cardboard noses, or masks, for carnivals and balls?"

"Not a bit. I guess I mean human noses."

"Go to Putney," exclaimed Mr. Snarley, snapping his fingers derisively. "I'm not going to believe that."

"Well, I tell you what I'll do with you, old hoss. I'll buy your nose."

"Mine?"

"Yes. It's not a very pretty or high-class nose, but I'll be game if you're on for a deal."

"I object to sell my nose, sir," exclaimed Mr. Snarley, with dignity.

"I don't want to cut it off until your death. You may do what you like with it, and take it where you like, during life; but at your death it belongs to me."

"Oh, that alters the case. What will you give for my nose on those terms?"

"That depends. I have a graduated scale. So much for a Roman nose, so much for a Grecian, a pug, and a squash."

"Mine isn't a squash," said Mr. Snarley.

"I didn't say it was, but if you ask me to classify it, I should call it a cross between low Roman and debased pug."

"You are not flattering."

"I am a dealer, sir," replied the Yankee, "and when I mean business, I guess I never cry an artical up."

"What's your price?" asked Snarley.

The Yankee looked at him attentively for a moment.

"Fifty dollars," he exclaimed.

"I am on," answered Snarley. "It is a deal."

"Done with you, stranger. To-morrow morning I'll part with the cash. It's a bargain, though I am afraid I shall lose by you, as you are beginning to paint it already."

"Paint what?"

"The proboscis. Nose, I mean. Guess you alcohol it. Take a drop for a night-cap, and so on."

"That is my business," answered Mr. Snarley, pouring out some champagne. "I consider it very impertinent of you to make any remark of that nature."

"Well, we're on. Whoever breaks the bargain between this and to-morrow morning shall pay for two dozen of cham. for the company."

"I guess it won't be I," said Mr. Snarley.

"Nor this child. I'm death on noses," replied the Yankee, adding, "Gentlemen all, I take you to witness that I've fairly bought this stranger's nose, and you all understand the deal."

There was a chorus of assent.

CHAPTER II.

SNARLEY AT WORK.

TURNING to Charley, the proprietor of the establishment, the Yankee whispered in a low tone.

Charley disappeared.

"Will you buy my nose?" asked Messiter.

"Not much," replied the Yankee; "it's too ugly."

Messiter subsided.

Presently Charley returned with a pair of tongs, made red hot in the fire.

He handed the instrument to the Yankee, who got up and walked around to Mr. Snarley, presenting it to his face.

"What are you about?" cried the latter.

"The tongs are red hot."

"I guess I know that," said the American.

"Are you mad, man?"

"Sane as a 'possum."

"What are you going to do? I say, take those things away from my face," said Snarley, leaning back in his chair.

"I reckon, stranger," answered the Yankee, "it's my custom, whenever I buy anything, to mark my merchandise, and it's necessary that I should stamp your nose."

"What!"

Snarley recoiled in affright.

"I've bought it, and I must stamp it. When it has my mark on it I shall know it is the nose I bought, otherwise you might alter it so that I couldn't recognize it. Sit still; I won't hurt you much, but I must mark the nose!"

"I'll be hanged if you do," shouted Snarley.

Turning to the company, the Yankee said, "Gentlemen, you are witnesses that the stranger has shifted round, and consequently the bargain's off."

"Certainly," said every one.

"Then I guess he's lost the cham."

Again there was a unanimous chorus of approval.

"Charley," said the Yankee, "bring in the mutton and let us have the champagne at the same time. Thank you, stranger; and I say, Charley, mind its well iced, or I guess there'll be a row in the house, and you'll be in it."

Mr. Snarley sat the picture of despair.

He was the victim of Yankee cuteness.

Still he had fairly lost the champagne, and could not dispute the payment of the two dozen bottles.

Scarcely had he made a wry face over the first glass, and while the others were drinking his health, than the great bell of the Sultan's palace was heard ringing.

"Hallo!" said Charley, "something's up in the palace."

Snarley and Hopkins looked at one another. They could guess that Dick had done something.

"You can talk Arabic, Charley," said Mr. Snarley, "go out, like a good fellow, and bring in the news."

Charley put on his straw hat and departed.

He was gone nearly an hour, and the anxiety of those who were in the secret was almost uncontrollable.

They crowded round Charley when he returned with eager faces.

"There is a dust-up," said Charley.

"What's happened?" asked Snarley.

"Well, you see, I have a friend who is one of the guards of the harem, and he told me all about it."

"Yes."

"Two of the ladies have escaped; one was only brought in last night, and the other was brought this morning."

"Bravo, Dick!" cried Messiter; "I told you he'd do it. Hurrah!"

"Are they pursued?" asked Hopkins.

"I should think so. The slave who came in this morning seems to be Old Nick himself."

"How is that?"

"She has broken the Kiskar Agha's head with a brick, and nearly killed the Grand Vizier, and even the Sultan himself. They can't make it out," said Charley.

"What are they doing?"

"Why it appears the white slave dressed herself in the Sultan's clothes, and passed out of the east gates with the other slaves. She had darkened her face, and the disguise was so perfect, the guards were deceived, and opened the gates for them to pass through."

"Where have they gone?"

"Along the road to what is called the Old Tombs."

"Where's that?"

"Why, a sandy tract, where some time ago they used to bury people in tombs. It's the home of the jackal and the pariah dog now, and all the tombs have fallen into decay."

"Do the Sultan's people know which way they have taken?" asked Snarley.

"Certainly they do."

"What's their game now, then?" inquired Messiter.

"A troop of horsemen have been sent after them, and every one expects they will be brought back soon."

Snarley, Hopkins, Messiter, and Ted looked at one another.

It was clear that each had the same thought in his mind.

"We must have a cut-in," said Messiter.

He had rightly interpreted what was in everybody's mind.

"Charley, old man," said Hopkins, "I don't mind telling you the truth."

"What's that?"

"The two who have escaped are Mrs. Snarley and Dick Lightheart, your lodgers."

Bless my soul, who'd have thought it?" said Charley.

"Now, you're a countryman, and you won't see them captured and brought back will you?"

"I shouldn't like to."

"Of course you wouldn't."

"What can I do?" asked Charley.

"Guide us without delay to the Old Tombs, give us what arms you have in the house, and let us see if we cannot help them."

"Captain Vipond has just got some revolvers and ammunition sent in," answered Charley.

"Call him," said Snarley.

Vipond did not mix himself with the other boarders at Charley's; he kept himself very much secluded, had his meals in a private room, and indulged himself in that melancholy which was his chief characteristic.

He knew nothing about their affairs as a rule, though he had heard of Polly being carried off.

The expectation that Harold Dugard was on his track continually haunted him, and he could think of nothing else.

We must except one thing.

That was the melancholy death of Adele.

He had not even the poor privilege of weeping over her tomb, for she lay at the bottom of the deep blue sea.

When Charley called him he came down at once.

"Did you send for me, Mr. Snarley?" he asked.

"I did," was the answer, "and I will explain what I want briefly. My wife has been carried off by the Vizier of the Sultan; Lightheart has gone in disguise to rescue her; they have both escaped from the harem, and the Sultan's soldiers are pursuing them. Will you kindly help us to look for the fugitives?"

"With pleasure," said Crawley Vipond; "that's to say, you are welcome to what arms I have, but I cannot go with you."

The man was a coward at heart.

"Very well; we accept your offer as far as it goes," said Snarley, concealing his disgust.

"Good morning," said Vipond. "I am occupied with important business; help yourselves to my stores."

He walked away.

"Not much to be expected from him," said Messiter.

"Never mind; we are strong enough," answered Hopkins.

"D—— I was just going to swear, but that wouldn't be right," said Charley. "But I'll come with you and do my little worst."

"Bravo, Charley," said Messiter; "you're a cock."

"I never put a pal in the hole in my life, sir," cried Charley.

"Well, come along, at once," said Hopkins, "and don't talk about it. I'm in a stink

about my gal, and I want to see her safe home with Master Lightheart, who's done his duty, God bless him!"

The member of the little party provided themselves with six-shooters, or revolvers of American make, and sallied forth under Charley's guidance for the tombs.

They did not guess that moment how much Dick Lightheart required their services.

But his adventures will be related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

JUST IN TIME.

As soon as Selim-el-Mandeb came to himself he raised an alarm in the palace, and as the slaves crowded into the room in answer to his frantic cries, he caused his royal master to be put to bed.

His wounds were bound up, and so were the Vizier's.

The latter, though weak from loss of blood, could not allow himself to feel ill.

He organized a pursuit of the fugitives, and even set out after them himself.

When with four soldiers and two slaves, he arrived at the sandy plain we have described, he selected a spot where a small tent was pitched for him, and, guarded by the soldiers, he resolved to stay there till night.

His object was to make the Sultan believe he was the most indefatigable of his ministers.

Several hours passed.

The captain of the guard, who was in command of the troops, came to the Vizier, who was sitting cross-legged at the entrance to the tent.

"In the name of the prophet, what news?" asked Selim.

"Bad," replied the captain. "I have been unable to find the runaways, O Selim—may thy shadow never grow less—and seeing that we waste our time, I have thought it good to send all my men back to their barracks."

"Now, may Allah put a bridle on my tongue," said Selim. "But, O Hafiz, is thy brain in a state of sanity? The Sultan—"

"May Allah shower on him blessings and peace," put in Hafiz.

"I say that our master will call for our heads if we return without these woman of the Franks, whom may the seven plagues overtake. Let us but catch them, and we shall be loaded with favors. I will promise thee a dozen of the shawls of Cashmere, woven in the looms of industry by the hand of science."

The captain of the guard shook his head.

"What can a man do more than his best?" he answered.

"Are your men dogs that they should be laughed at by these girls?"

"They say that one of them has the evil eye. Several horses have fallen and injured their riders. Two soldiers were stricken by the sun. They have fear in their hearts, O Selim. I am less than dust, but I have said the words of truth."

"O Hafiz," said Selim, "I am not one of those who keep the inside of my palm in darkness. Scour me the country again; take with you the four soldiers who are my guard. You shall have gold, for of a truth I do not like to return to my master without the Frankish women."

The captain of the guard again assured him that nothing could be done.

At this the Vizier lost his temper.

"Contemptible slave," he cried, "you shall be disgraced from your command! I will have thee beaten with the stick, dog that thou art!"

"God is great; may he take you in His holy keeping," said the captain, in alarm.

"Inshallah!" cried the Vizier, "I will strike you myself. I will teach you to play at hide and seek round my little finger. What will you laugh at my beard?"

The fact was, the Vizier had been drinking some strong wine, and his head was inflamed.

Losing all control over himself, he rushed upon the captain of the guard and struck him with the palm of his hand.

"Take that, dog!" he cried, "and that, and that! Am I dirt to sit behind you and be led by a string?"

The captain drew his scimitar and kept the Vizier at arm's length.

He too was furious.

"Dog yourself," he said; "I will tell our royal master how you sit in your tent, drinking the wine of the Franks."

Selim trembled with rage.

"There is no word in Arabic which is strong enough for me to express my contempt for thee, O Selim, but I will say to thee what I have heard the Franks say when they come over in ships and quarrel in the wine shops of Zanzibar, 'dam.' It is spoken. I have called the 'dam,' O Selim."

The captain of the guard was quite satisfied with this.

He thought he had overwhelmed the Vizier.

The English sailors had used the word to one another once in his hearing, and a free fight was the result.

This made him think it was a contemptuous epithet.

The insult was doubled and intensified in Selim's opinion because he was sworn at in a foreign and hated language.

Jumping up and down, he in vain tried to get a Hafiz.

He "went for him," but was kept off at the point of the sword.

"'Dam,' do you say?" he cried, hoarse with rage. "Am I 'dam?' If I am 'dam,' then you are the father of 'dam.' Why should I stay here to be called 'dam?' After all I am somebody. I will defile the grave of 'dam's' father, and all his ancestors. I haven't lived to my age to eat 'dam,' and to eat it from such hands."

"Mashallah!" cried Hafiz, "thine is the anger of the fool. Thou art bereft of reason. Shall I pluck thee by the beard?"

A set-to would have taken place had not loud cries on their right arrested their attention.

The soldiers were shouting at the top of their voices.

Looking in their direction, the captain of the guard beheld two persons struggling with his men.

One wielded a scimitar.

A soldier fell.

"It is the Frankish women, O Selim," exclaimed Hafiz.

"Hurt them not. The whip shall score their fair skins, but they must not fall before the sword," answered the Vizier.

He entirely forgot his ill-temper in his delight.

"Allah el Allah!" he cried, grasping the hand of Hafiz. "Praise be to God! You are a man indeed."

The captain of the guard ran to the spot.

It happened that the soldiers had picketed their horses close to the mouth of the old tomb in which Dick had taken refuge.

As he emerged with Polly in his arms, he saw his mistake.

It was too late to retreat.

In fact, his retreat was cut off.

Encircling Polly with one arm, he fought fiercely with his right.

Two soldiers fell mortally wounded before his strokes.

The remaining two were incensed against him, and had not Hafiz come up, they would have taken advantage of his failing strength to cut him down.

Eventually he was overpowered and disarmed.

He and Polly were dragged roughly to the tent, where the Vizier was standing rubbing his hands and calling upon the prophet to witness that he would be thankful for his star being in luck.

"Bismillah!" he exclaimed. "In the name of the prophet, this is good for the eyes. Let

us start for the palace at once. The Sultan will order them the stick till every toe they have shall ache with pain."

Both Dick and Polly were too much dejected to speak.

The setting sun covered the sandy plain with a pale, yellowish flood of light.

It was a lovely evening.

How pleasant would it have been to sit at the open window at "Charley's," looking out upon the harbor, and sipping iced wine!

But alas! that was impossible.

They had no such pleasant prospect before them.

Suddenly an idea occurred to Dick.

"Selim," he said, "you love gold. If I give you five thousand pieces, will you let us go?"

"Yes, I will," he replied. "Five thousand pieces is a king's ransom; but where, in the name of the prophet, are you to find this gold?"

"In a tomb close by; descend with your slaves, and you will find it heaped up on the floor.

"It is well," said the Vizier.

He repeated his promise that he would let them escape, and Dick showed them the entrance to the tomb.

The gold was discovered, and sacks for it were hastily made out of the tent-cloth.

It filled thirteen bags.

"Now," said Dick, "good-night. Give our love to the Sultan."

Selim made a sign to the soldiers.

They seized Polly and Dick, and binding their arms behind them, fastened the end to the stirrup-irons of the two horses.

"March!" said Selim, "we have already lost too much time."

"You treacherous old villain," said Dick, "have you no respect for your word?"

The Vizier made no answer.

"You have got the gold; what more do you want?" continued Dick.

Neither Selim nor Hafiz spoke.

The soldiers mounted their horses, and the two chiefs walked in front, and the two slaves behind; thus the captives were in the middle.

In this division, they took the road to the palace.

They were dragged along by the horses, and could make no resistance.

Dick was frantic with rage.

If he had not given the Vizier the money, he would not have minded so much, though he had nothing but death to expect when he was found out.

Polly was a woman, and her sex would save her life.

When his imposture was discovered, he did not doubt he would be cruelly tortured and killed.

Crossing the plain, they came to the road with high walls, which they had traversed in the morning flushed with hope.

"I've done my best," he muttered, with a downcast air.

All at once the horses stopped.

Two shots were heard.

At the same instant, two saddles were emptied, and the dying soldiers bit the dust.

The horses reared up, and would have dashed away, had not their heads been seized by strangers, whom for the moment Dick did not recognize.

Again two pistols were discharged.

This time the slaves, who with difficulty carried some of the gold, the rest being slung over the saddle, fell to the ground.

The Vizier took to his heels and ran as fast as he could.

Hafiz was a brave man, and drawing his scimitar, made a stand, which did not avail him much.

A shot broke his arm, and he fell by the side of his men.

"That's the lot, I think," exclaimed a voice, which Dick instantly knew to be Messiter's.

"Cut the captive's loose, then, and let's get off home, or that old coward who ran away

will send a troop of horse after us," said another voice, which was Charley's.

Polly, half fainting, was released from her uncomfortable position, and soon found herself in the arms of her husband, while old Hopkins pressed a bottle of brandy and water to her lips.

Ted and Messiter attended to Dick, whom they chaffed about his disguise.

"Don't chaff now," replied Dick. "I want to get home; we are not safe yet. Sling those bags of gold over one of the horses."

"Gold?"

"Yes; heaps of it. Look sharp."

Messiter and Ted obeyed his instructions.

Polly was placed on a horse, being too weak to walk any further, and the little party started for the city, Dick explaining all that happened as he went along.

"By jingo!" exclaimed Mr. Snarley, dancing with delight; "we were only just in time."

Then he caught hold of Dick's hand, and wringing it warmly, added:

"I shall never forget you, my boy—never."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS CARAVAN.

FEARFUL lest the Sultan should take some steps to be revenged upon Lightheart, Captain Vipond, whose preparations were all made, resolved to leave Zanzibar the next morning at daybreak.

Dhows, as the boats there are called, were in readiness to take the party from the island to Bagamoyo.

Mr. Snarley, Polly and old Hopkins determined to quit Zanzibar at once and return to England.

Dick and Messiter were very sorry to part with their old friends.

The former insisted upon Snarley accepting three of his bags of gold.

"Sure to find it useful, sir," said Dick.

"My dear boy, I thank you," replied Snarley, "for all you have done for me. We shall meet again, I hope."

Polly also thanked Dick, and old Hopkins's eye was guilty of a tear when he took leave of the gallant preserver of his daughter.

Just as day broke, the ship hoisted her anchor, set sail, and glided majestically from the harbor.

Half an hour afterward Dick's party started for Bagamoyo.

Banks, the midshipman, was absent.

His non-appearance was explained by Menzies, who said that he had shipped in the *Hartlepool*, not caring to face the perils of a long travel in East Central Africa.

The party then consisted of Captain Crawley Vipond, who wished to settle in some lonely spot where the foot of a white man had never before rested.

On the sea he was not safe from his terrible enemy.

Would he be so in the vast recesses of the African continent?

That was the question, which time alone could solve.

After him as captain, or head of the expedition, came Dick Lightheart, whose object was to trade in ivory and gold-dust with the natives, and, if possible, discover the whereabouts of our illustrious countryman and African explorer, Dr. Livingstone.

Ted accompanied him as his servant.

Messiter went with him as a friend and companion.

Professor Crab's idea in joining the party was to collect materials for his great book, he being entirely devoted to science and nature.

The first point they intended to make for was Unyanyembi, 360 miles from Bagamoyo, an important trading station of the Arabs.

To reach this place they had to pass through dense forests, swamps of black mud, to cross rivers, to face lions, hippopotami, and other wild and savage creatures.

To pass through the countries of petty chiefs, hostile to the whites, whose friendship could only be bought by paying tribute.

To encounter the dreaded Mukunguru, or intermittent African fever, which keeps attacking those unused to the climate.

The fever which made Livingstone a mere "ruckle of bones," as he himself expressed it, and which has been known to turn a young man's hair gray for ever.

But the boys cared little for those dangers.

They were full of the spirit of adventure, and longed for the march.

It was necessary to stay a week in Bagamoyo to collect Pagazi, or native carriers and donkeys.

Horses will not live in this part of the country, and as the goods, consisting of cloths, beads, ammunition, arms, wire and provisions, were numerous, one hundred and fifty Pagazi at least were required.

The native leader of the Pagazi was a tall, thick-set man, named Sangaru.

He spoke broken English, and was a trustworthy fellow from all accounts.

A caravan, he said, had quitted Bagamoyo for the interior the day they arrived.

It had departed in a great hurry on hearing of their approach.

Its commander was a white man, and he had with him fifty Pagazi or carriers.

Dick inquired what the white man was like, and the description he received exactly resembled that of Harold Dugard, the strange commander of the still stranger ship.

It was Dick's firm opinion that Dugard had left his ship and was following close upon the heels of his enemies.

He would not tell Crawley Vipond this, for fear he might give up the expedition, and think of hiding elsewhere.

It was arranged that the Pagazi should all have arms, so that they might fight as soldiers if necessary.

It was the middle of June when the caravan started, being preceded by the mysterious party about a week.

The masika, or rainy season, was over.

During the masika the rain comes down in sheets almost incessantly for weeks.

It swells the rivers and creates swamps of black mud, breeding fevers and diseases.

Dick and Sangaru started at the head of the caravan, Ted after them, carrying the British flag.

"Binderi kisungu," cried the natives, meaning the white man's flag.

"Hurrah! we're off," cried Dick.

"Sofari, sofari," exclaimed the carriers.

"A journey, a journey."

Turning round, Sangaru cried:

"Pakia, set out, start."

Dick fired each barrel of his six-shooter, and Messiter, who brought up the rear to see there were no stragglers, answered him.

Away they went, full of life and hope, beneath the blazing sun of an African summer, into the wilds of Africa.

CHAPTER V.

RIVER HORSES.

It is not our purpose to describe the countries and names of all the places through which our travelers passed.

That would better become a writer of travels.

It is with incident and adventure that we have to deal.

Suffice it to say that after a fortnight's travel the tents were pitched on a small plateau.

A river ran about a mile off, and game abounded in the neighborhood.

The thorny acacia covered the ground, and the African flies buzzed around.

Most dangerous of these is the setse fly.

Its sting pricks like the point of a needle, and soon men and donkeys stream with blood.

Watermelons grew on the ground.

Amidst the trees and long grass could be

seen antelope and deer, with many strange birds among the ebony and calabash trees.

The journey so far had not been productive of any serious accidents.

A few Pagazis had deserted, stealing what they could lay hands on.

Some donkeys were dead, and others had rolled in the mud, doing no great damage to their packs.

It was a fine opportunity for a hunting expedition, and Dick, Messiter, and Menzies agreed to go out separately and see what sport they could meet with.

Captain Vipond kept in his tent, seldom speaking to any one, and evidently occupied with his own bitter thoughts.

Menzies still hated Dick as much as ever, but he had not shown any signs of open hostility.

Perhaps he was biding his time, like a snake in the grass, as he was.

Dick strolled along with a couple of rifles. One he intended for big game, such as hippopotamus, giraffe, lion, rhinoceros, should he be fortunate enough to meet with them.

The other was for deer and antelope, for which the Frazer shell, or bone crusher, was unnecessary.

At length he came to the river, the stream of which was not very swift in the summer months.

Here he saw several hippopotami, or river horse, at play.

Their huge heads and tremendous jaws were fearful to look upon.

He watched them for some time, and was just about to fire, when he saw a roughly-hewn canoe, paddled along by one man.

Getting behind a tree, he bent his gaze upon it.

To his surprise the man was young Menzies, who ran the little boat into some rushes; and jumped on land.

"What's his little game?" said Dick to himself.

He had always distrusted Menzies, and he determined to follow him, as he appeared to have some fixed purpose in view rather than to be in pursuit of game.

Menzies came very near the tree behind which Dick was hidden.

Raising his gun to his shoulder, he fired two shots, which, in the wilds of Africa, is a signal that travelers wish to trade with any natives living near.

Dick's curiosity was raised to the highest pitch.

In a few moments the shots were answered by a similar number, though they appeared to be distant.

Menzies at once started in their direction.

Dick followed him cautiously for about a quarter of a mile, without being perceived.

Then he saw before him, on the skirts of a forest, a camp pitched in a hollow.

The dusky forms of the resting Pagazi were lying about in the shade.

A tall, handsome man quitted a large tent, and advanced to meet Menzies.

Again Dick sought the shelter of a friendly tree.

The stranger and Menzies halted within hearing distance of Dick.

Still more was the latter astonished, when, in the handsome form of the stranger, he recognized Harold Dugard, the eccentric commander of the strange vessel.

This, then, was the owner of the mysterious caravan which had started so hurriedly from Bagamoyo as they entered.

His plans were not yet matured.

The time had not come.

That Menzies had been and was in communication with him there could be no doubt.

Menzies was a traitor.

The conversation that took place between them settled this question beyond the shadow of suspicion.

"Well," said Dugard, "what news do you bring me?"

"We are camped within a mile and a half of this place, on the same side of the river, which I have descended in a canoe to avoid observation and pursuit," replied Menzies.

"Is Vipond in camp?"

"He is."

A terrible shiver ran through Dugard at this reply.

"At length my enemy is within my grasp," he continued, "but I want him delivered into my hands alive."

"You shall have him within three hours, provided you do not forget your part of the contract. That must be stuck to, I guess," answered Menzies.

"What do you want?"

"Dick Lightheart must be given up alive to me. I've got one or two Red Indian tortures I want to try on him, I guess."

"How has he offended you?"

"Oh, in lots of ways. He's a most insulting brute, and too cocky by half for a down-easter like me, I reckon."

"It's a pity. I took a liking to that boy," replied Dugard.

"That's more than I ever did, so that's the straight tip," answered Menzies.

"Will nothing else than this life content you?"

"Nothing. What do you think I came in to this humbugging Africa for?"

"Revenge," said Dugard.

"Exactly. You have the same motive. You heard of the death of your Adele through his violence, and—"

"Speak not of her," said Dugard, interrupting him, as he dug his nails into his flesh spasmodically. "I cannot bear it."

"Didn't mean to rile you," replied Menzies.

"But I tell you, whatever you feel for Crawley Vipond, I feel for Lightheart. I'm death and snakes on that fellow, and I calculate I'll give him toke before long."

"You have come to the right place," answered Dugard, with a grim smile; "there is no law here. You may murder an enemy without the fear of a rope; but in my case it will not be murder."

"What then?"

"Justice."

As he uttered this word, Harold Dugard drew himself up proudly, and folding his arms, looked up to heaven.

"It is settled, then, that if I betray Vipond to you, I shall have Lightheart and his money as my share and reward," asked Menzies.

"It is."

"My watch is to-night," continued Menzies; "all will be asleep, and you will capture them as easily as lambs in a fold."

"Will you?" thought Dick.

"I think I shall bind Lightheart to a tree," continued Menzies, "and stick knives into him all over, and then burn him slowly over a fire."

"You're a precious scoundrel and a nice companion, I don't think," muttered Dick.

Harold Dugard exclaimed after a pause in a sad and solemn tone:

"My life's work is nearly accomplished. When I found that Vipond had escaped from the *Belle of New Orleans*, I followed him, and hearing that he was going to hide in the recesses of Africa, I came here to make sure of my prey."

"You won't have long to wait," remarked Menzies.

"No, it seems as if the sands of his life were running out."

"How shall you kill him?"

"I shall make him die a slow and lingering death, and watch him while he dies, taunting him with his fate, and reminding him of the wrongs he has done me," replied Dugard.

"Hang him up to the branches of a tree by his hair, with his feet just touching the ground—his toes, I mean," said Menzies, exulting like a demon. "That will wake him up. He'll feel as if the roof of his head was coming off, and when he gets thirsty and hungry, you'll have the whip hand of him."

"Not a bad idea," replied Dugard. "Noth-

ing is too bad for him, and what would to many appear cruelty of an inhuman kind is only simple justice to him."

"You won't forget the money you promised me at Zanzibar if I would betray my party?" said Menzies.

"No. You can have it now if you like."

"I can wait. Come at midnight for the attack."

"Very well. How far off are you, and in what direction?" said Dugard.

"North-east, about two miles. You can't make a mistake."

"Adieu," said Dugard. "Do your best."

"I guess I shall this time," answered Menzies.

They shook hands, and Menzies walked away whistling, while Harold Dugard returned moodily to his camp.

The conversation being ended, Dick started on the homeward track.

Nearing the place where Menzies had left his canoe, he thought it would be good fun to get in and have a shot at the river horses.

Accordingly he put his Lancaster rifle on the bottom, sprang in, pushed off, and was soon paddling lazily down with the stream.

All at once he found himself in the center of a group of river horses, which sprang up on all sides of him.

Steering gently through the huge brutes, he got clear, and began to think himself lucky.

But one monster hippopotamus followed him, blowing the water out of her mouth in a long stream.

She seemed very angry, and he soon saw the cause.

Her young one was in the direct way of the canoe, which struck it on the head.

The mother made a strange noise, and her mate came swimming and diving from the herd to her assistance.

Seeing that he was menaced with danger, Dick took up his rifle and put a shell in the creature's head.

With a plaintive cry, she splashed about in all the agonies of death.

The male looked at her inquiringly for a moment, and rushing at the boat, the monster seized the side in its immense jaws.

His teeth made the wood crack like pasteboard, and before Dick could fire again, he was struggling in the water.

He began to swim toward the shore.

The hippopotamus, with a snorting noise, followed him.

Dick gave himself up for lost.

Happening to look to the bank, he saw Menzies, who was searching for his canoe among the tall reeds which fringed the river.

"Help! help!" he cried.

"Is it you, Lightheart?" replied Menzies.

"Yes. Fire quickly, or the river horses will make a meal of me," answered Dick.

"What a nuisance," said Menzies. "I'm not loaded, and I've left my powder and ball in camp."

"You won't leave me to die like this?" exclaimed Dick, despairingly.

"What can I do?" asked Menzies, folding his arms and looking on contentedly.

The snorting of the hippopotamus grew nearer.

Dick turned round and faced him.

He was an enormous specimen of his kind, and his hideous head, just raised above the water, was within a few feet of its prey.

Suddenly throwing up his heels, Dick dived.

The monster passed over the spot where he had been but one moment before.

Collecting his senses as well as he could, Dick remembered that he had a bowie-knife in his belt.

It was his only weapon.

Drawing it with his right hand, he opened it, treading water to keep himself afloat.

The river horse had turned, and espying him again, made another rush at him.

Menzies continued to look on as calmly as

if he had been at a theater witnessing a tragedy.

Dick threw himself a little on one side by a vigorous stroke of his left arm, and dexterously drove the knife into the beast's eye.

A howl of pain and rage broke from it.

Again Dick dived, coming up this time nearer the shore.

He dared not swim, lest he should be overtaken and snapped in half.

So he remained still.

The hippopotamus found him out again, and dashed at him as before.

Dick awaited his onset, and repeated his maneuver.

This time he was lucky enough to strike the remaining eye.

Completely blinded, and half choked with the blood which streamed down over his snout, and tinged the water with a crimson hue, the beast churned the stream into foam.

His piteous cries attracted the attention of the herd, who came up, as if to his assistance, from all parts.

"Now for it," thought Dick.

Casting aside the knife, which had done him such good service, he struck out for the shore.

The nearest point was at least fifty yards off.

On all sides the hippopotami were nearing him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

By dint of much exertion Dick managed to reach the reeds, through which he pushed his way.

Several infuriated river-horses were just behind him.

Another moment, and he would have been too late.

Menzies was standing close by, leaning upon his rifle, and he stretched out his hand with a smile.

"Lucky shave that, I guess," he cried.

"No thanks to you," said Dick, who knew what his words were worth, since he had overheard his treacherous conversation with Dugard.

A thought entered Dick's head as he spoke.

Without any warning he seized Menzies's rifle, and fired it at the nearest of the hippopotami.

The brute fell with a ball in his skull, the bone being regularly crushed by the massive leaden bullet.

"I thought you said it wasn't loaded," said Dick, with a look of contempt.

"Well, hang me, that's curious," said Menzies, turning pale.

"What is?"

"The shooter was loaded all the time, and I didn't know it."

"You're a humbug," said Dick.

"May I drop this minute if I knew it," asserted Menzies.

"Rot," said Dick; "you were never my friend, and you wanted to see me dead, didn't you?"

"All right," said Menzies, changing his tone; "if you will have it, I did, and it's a pity that old hoss you blinded didn't chew you up. Guess I wish he had."

"It would have saved you the trouble of hanging me up off my toes by the hair of my head," said Dick, with a sneer.

Menzies' face became livid.

"And sticking knives into me," continued Dick, enjoying the effect of his words.

"How do you know that?" gasped Menzies.

"I know more than you think for, my pippin," said Dick.

"By the living jinjo," said Menzies, who was not deficient in courage, "you know too much, my bully boy. It's your life or mine."

Dick held the rifle firmly, but Menzies drew

his knife, and running upon him, tried to stab him.

Stepping back and receiving the point in his sleeve, Dick clubbed the gun in a dangerous fashion.

"Put down that knife, or I'll bram you!" he exclaimed.

Menzies saw that it would be almost impossible to get within his range.

Sullenly he threw the knife on the ground.

"Curse you to all eternity!" he growled.

Dick drew a piece of rope from his pocket, and seizing his arms, bound them behind his back.

"What are you going to do with me?" inquired Menzies, trembling.

"Try you by court-martial and give you the doom of a traitor."

"I've done nothing, so help me bob; I'm innocent," cried Menzies.

"Are you? Then I don't know what being guilty is."

"At least let me hear what I'm accused of."

"You'll find out, time enough," said Dick.

"You could not have seen me with—"

"To cut it short," said Dick, "I not only saw you with Harold Dugard, but I heard you promise to betray the camp at midnight."

"Then I suppose it's all UP with me," exclaimed Menzies, shrugging his shoulders; "I'm not afraid to die, Lighthead, but I'm young, and I've friends at home in the States whom I should like to see again."

"So have I got friends," said Dick; "you did not think of me."

"I was wrong, I own it; you are brave, and the brave are always generous."

"You have heard us talking, and you know very well that Dugard is Captain Vipond's mortal enemy. You are with us, and you have sold us. We should all have been shot as we slept if I hadn't twigged your game."

"I'm very sorry. If I swear I won't do it again, will you say nothing about it?"

"No."

"You won't?" said Menzies, with a despairing glance.

"No, I tell you. What was your object in selling us?"

Menzies was silent.

"My life," continued Dick, "and when I think that you have carried your hatred to that extent against a fellow who never did you any serious harm, you can't wonder that I look upon you as a snake to be trampled on."

"I don't deny that I'm a varmint that wants wiping out," said Menzies; "all I ask is mercy."

"You won't get it," said Dick, who had steeled his heart.

"Think of my poor mother," said Menzies, while a tear came into his eye.

"Your mother will be well rid of a son like you."

"However bad I may be, she won't think so, poor old soul. Look here, Lighthead, will you do this?"

"What?"

"Turn me up in the wild region, without arms, food, or anything, and let me take my darned chance?"

"Which would be to go and join Harold Dugard at once," replied Dick, with a harsh laugh.

"No, it wouldn't. I'd steer right away from him. On my soul I would."

"I am green. I know I am green, but I'm not so jolly green as all that," answered Dick, "so belay jawing, and march. You'll have to be tried, and that's flat. When it comes to trying to get a whole caravan surprised and murdered, it is time to do something."

Menzies saw it was no use to urge Dick further, and in his own mind he was forced to admit that he was acting as he had a right to do for the general safety.

His crafty mind became bent upon the

best means of escaping, and he resolved not to lose the first chance that offered.

The tramp back to camp was performed in silence.

Dick held the end of the rope, and Menzies followed after him, utterly powerless to attack him.

A fierce hatred burned in his heart.

He thought his time might come again yet, for while there is life there is hope.

When the camp was reached, they found the Pagazi cutting up a fine deer and an antelope, which Messiter had shot.

The latter was proud of his success.

"What sport, Dick?" he asked. "Look at my deer."

"I've caught a traitor," said Dick.

"And got a ducking," said Messiter, who looked first at his wet garments and then at Menzies. "But what has happened?"

"Come to the captain's tent, and ask Professor Crab and Ted to follow," replied Dick.

"One moment, said the professor, who was close by; "I was just explaining to this boy Ted, whose ignorance would be amusing if it were not so dense and lamentable, the difference between a springbok and a deer. You see the spring—"

"It isn't spring now, sir; it's summer," interrupted Messiter.

"A bad pun," said the professor. "Recollect what Dr. Johnson said, namely, that a man who would make a pun would pick a pocket."

Dick led his captive to Captain Vipond's tent.

"May I come in, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly, Lighthead. What is it?" said Crawley Vipond.

Dick entered, leading Menzies, his captive. Messiter, the professor, and Ted followed.

"I want this fellow," continued Dick, "to be tried by what I may call a court-martial, for if one of our own number, in a wild place like this, plots against us, we cannot appeal to the law, because there is none. We must be our own judges. Is that fair?"

"Quite," said the professor. "In the wilds of America the settlers have instituted Lynch law. That is a law made and carried out by themselves without judges or courts."

"Very well," said Dick; "you, sir, Captain Vipond and Messiter, and Ted, if you like, shall be the court or the judges."

"Exactly. State your case."

Menzies stood sulkily, with his eyes cast on the ground.

"We all know that Captain Vipond has an enemy who seeks his life," began Dick.

"Harold Dugard," said the professor.

"That is the man. Well, Dugard is encamped within a mile and a half of us, with about fifty Pagazi."

Vipond turned deadly pale.

His limbs trembled under him. He drew his breath with difficulty, and seemed in danger of fainting.

"Brandy, brandy," he murmured, in a hoarse voice.

Messiter ran to a case and poured out a dram, which he drank eagerly.

The spirit seemed to revive him somewhat.

"Go on," said he.

"This morning, as I was out shooting, I saw Menzies, and followed him."

"Call him the prisoner," observed the professor; "he is in custody, and it will sound more legal."

"Certainly. The prisoner fired two shots as a signal, and a man, whom I instantly recognized as Harold Dugard, came up. While they were talking, I hid behind a tree close to them."

"You are sure you are not mistaken," said Vipond; "it seems so odd that he should be here on the African continent."

"Not at all. I saw him once at Zanzibar, but I did not tell you for fear of alarming you."

"Proceed," said the professor, with a judicial air.

"It was arranged between them," continued Dick, "that to-night at twelve o'clock, it being Menzies' watch, an attack should be made upon our camp."

"What were the prisoner's motives?"

"First of all revenge, secondly money."

"Revenge upon whom?"

"Me," said Dick; "he stipulated that I should be taken alive and given up to him to be tortured and killed."

"You swear that what you state is true, upon your honor?" said the professor.

"Dick never told a deliberate lie in his life, and a question like that is an insult," observed Messiter.

"It is a form," answered the professor. "This is a matter of life and death, and we must not have anything on our consciences. I have known Lighthead for some time, and every confidence in his honor, but the best men are always sworn in a court of justice."

"I understand you to say that the prisoner Menzies has sold us to the enemy," said Vipond, speaking with evident difficulty.

"Yes, sir. I had a narrow escape of my life with some river horses afterwards, and he left me to my fate, when he might have saved me, but I escaped by the skin of my teeth—"

"Pardon me, but that is not a fit expression for a witness in a court of justice such as this," interrupted the professor.

"Well, I'll say I escaped simply—had a rough and tumble with him, and—"

"That I also object to. What is a rough and—what did you say?" cried the professor.

"It is evident you don't tumble," replied Dick, with a smile. "But to please you, I will say we had a fight, in which I got the best of it. I captured the prisoner, taxed him with his crime, which he admitted, and binding him, brought him here to be tried."

"That is your case," said Vipond.

"It is, sir."

CHAPTER VII.

LYNCH LAW.

CAPTAIN VIPOND and the professor talked together in a low tone for some time, afterwards appealing to Messiter.

At length Captain Vipond said:

"Our thanks are due to you, Lighthead, for your watchfulness and courage."

Dick bowed.

"Under Providence it is to be hoped that you have been the means of saving our lives, for to be forewarned is to be doubly armed."

"Not so much fear now, sir," replied Dick. Menzies looked up with his usual insolent air.

"Am I to have nothing to say," he asked.

"I was about to call upon you for your defense," answered Vipond.

"About time, too," exclaimed Menzies; "I thought you'd get tired of listening to a parcel of lies. Lighthead and I are enemies; he hates me and I hate him, so he has cooked up this story about Mr. Dugard, who, I'll take my solemn oath, I never saw in my life."

"Beware," said the professor solemnly.

"Of what?"

"Beware how you go to your death with a lie on your lips."

"There is no lie about that. I speak the truth."

"You have no doubt been brought up in the sublime truths of the Christian religion, and said your prayers at your mother's knee."

"Don't talk about my mother; I don't like it," said Menzies, fidgeting, restlessly.

It was clear he loved his mother, and any allusion to her in his desperate state irritated him.

The fact was, he had been a source of great trouble and worry to her before he ran away to sea, and his conscience smote him.

However bad a boy may be, he has got a soft point somewhere.

"You plead not guilty," said Captain Vipond.

"Of course I do, when I am innocent."

"Is that all you have to urge in your own behalf?"

"I am the victim of Lighthead's spite, and all I ask is to be allowed to go away—right away. I guess I shan't trouble you any more."

Again the judges conferred together.

The president, who was Captain Vipond, then said:

"Prisoner Menzies, the court has decided against you on Lighthead's evidence, and we condemn you to death."

At the word death, all Menzies's insolent manner vanished.

His color went and came.

"You have no right to take my life," he cried. "Why should you make yourselves my judges? You will be my murderers if you use your power to kill me, and my blood will cry to Heaven for vengeance."

Owing to your youth, we would willingly look over your fault, but it is impossible," said Vipond.

In his terror at being found out by Dugard he would have condemned a dozen to death for betraying him.

"Is there no hope?" asked Menzies.

"None."

"You will plead for me, Lighthead," he cried.

Dick shook his head moodily.

"How am I to die?" asked Menzies.

"You will be hanged to a tree in an hour's time," answered Vipond.

"At least let me be shot; that is an honorable death; the other is the fate of a felon."

"Well," said Vipond, "I've no great objection to that; you shall be shot. Tell off a squad of Pagazi, Messiter, if you please, to be ready with rifles for the execution in an hour's time by your watch."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Messiter.

"Remove the prisoner, boy"—this to Ted; "you are answerable for his safety."

"Come along, governor," said Ted. "I must look after you. I'm only an odd boy, but I've got my feelings, and shouldn't like my promising career to be cut short."

He took hold of the rope's end, and dragging at it, continued:

"Gee up. Pull along, Smunko. I'll see you don't give me any leg."

While Ted conducted the wretched Menzies out of the tent, Messiter went to select six Pagazi for the execution of the sentence.

Dick remained with Vipond and the professor.

"It grieves me to the heart," said the latter, "to see a lad of that age cut suddenly off."

"There are plenty of boys, goodness knows," said the captain. "I'd as soon shoot as flog one. This Menzies deserves no pity. He would have betrayed me into the hands of Dugard. We might all have been killed."

"Very true. It is wrong, perhaps, of me to grieve, but I am averse to bloodshed if it can be avoided. However, he has richly deserved his fate, and I suppose self-preservation is the first law of nature."

Dick went out and met Sangaru, who had heard an explanation from Messiter of the crime and sentence.

"What this, Bana (which is the native word for master)?" he said. "Is it true that Miringu (the Almighty) is about to take the soul of white man?"

"Yes," replied Dick. "His life is to be taken in a short time. He would have got us all shot."

"This is news. How can a white man be so base?"

"There are bad whites as well as blacks."

"Alkema, Bana (no, master)," answered Sangaru, with the flattery peculiar to his race. "The Wasunga (white men) all good, have religion, law, educate; only poor savage black man who bad, because he not told, and can't know right."

"Get your men ready, and tell them to load with ball cartridge," answered Dick.

Sangaru departed to obey orders, much astonished at what he had heard.

So were all the Pagazi.

Neither Messiter nor Dick remarked that a short time afterward Sangaru and Menzies were in close conversation together.

The native gave him a cup of water.

This Ted reported.

"It's not against orders, is it, sir?" he asked Messiter.

"No; let him have what he likes, poor beggar," replied Messiter.

"Can the nigger talk to him, sir? They're as thick as thieves."

"It doesn't matter."

Ted was satisfied, and did not interfere with the interview between Sangaru and Menzies, who were in the prisoner's tent together.

At length the stern figure of Captain Vipond emerged from the central tent.

Dick was on duty outside, one of the three boys being always on the watch, unless they delegated the task to Sangaru in the daytime.

"Time," ejaculated the captain.

Beckoning to Sangaru, Dick exclaimed:

"Is the firing party ready?"

"Yes, Bana," was the reply.

"Lead out the prisoner, and have a grave dug when the shots are fired. I will let this handkerchief fall from the top of my rifle as a signal."

Menzies was led out of the tent, where he had passed his few remaining moments on earth.

He passed Dick, who held out his hand and said:

"Good-bye; I am sorry for you."

"You sorry for me!" almost yelled Menzies: "why it is you who have brought me to this!"

"Your own evil disposition rather."

"I shake hands with you? Ten thousand curses on you! Wait a bit, my lad; you'll find some day what it is to have made an enemy of a thorough-bred Yankee."

Dick smiled sadly.

He thought this was the bombast of despair.

Conducted to the fatal spot, which was just outside the camp, Menzies stood upright and faced the six Pagazi who were to shoot him.

"All ready, Bana," said Sangaru.

Menzies did not flinch in the least, and although the hot sun poured down upon his unprotected head, he did not close his eyes.

"Fire!" exclaimed Dick.

He lowered his rifle as he spoke, and the handkerchief fell to the ground.

There was a discharge of fire-arms.

Menzies staggered backward.

Dick turned away his head, for he did not wish to see his justly-punished companion rolling in the death agony.

All was over!

CHAPTER VIII.

ATTACKED BY NIGHT.

THE professor came out of the tent at the sound of the shots.

"Poor fellow!" said Dick to him. "He's gone where the good niggers go."

"Hey, lad!" answered the professor; "what's this?"

Dick turned hastily round, and beheld Menzies rise to his feet perfectly unharmed.

He took one glance in Dick's direction, shook his fist at him, and disappeared in a thicket of shrubs on the left.

"Treachery!" cried Dick.

"I thought he was shot," said the professor.

"So did I. He fell sure enough at the discharge. Where is Sangaru? Ted."

"Yes, sir."

"Call Sangaru."

The leader of the Pagazi was at the head of the firing party, and he reluctantly approached.

"What is the meaning of this, you rascal?" said Dick.

"Me know nothing more nor you, Bana," replied Sangaru.

"No lies, you scoundrel," thundered Dick, raising a thick whip he held in his hand.

"Me tell truth, Bana. Me half Christian."

"You black villain! How was it your soldiers did not kill the prisoner?"

"Tell them to fire high, so as to make for head and heart. S'pose they fire too high."

There was a grin on the fellow's face as he said this, which he could not repress.

In an instant Dick seized him by the hair, and dealt him a couple of dozen blows on the back with all his might.

His yells might have been heard a mile off.

"No more beat, Bana; that do; leave off, Bana," he said, in a spasmodic voice.

"Get out, you wretch," replied Dick, casting him from him; "if I have any more of those tricks, I'll have you shot."

Sangaru slunk away, rubbing his back, which was pretty well welted.

"That accounts for the nigger being with Menzies in the tent so long," remarked Messiter.

"Why did you allow it," asked Dick, "if you knew it?"

"What was I to think? Ted told me."

"No doubt," said Dick, "Menzies bought him over in some way, but those niggers are so artful and such liars, it is hopeless to expect the truth from them. I'm sorry for it, because we have another enemy let loose."

"It was a dodge," observed Messiter.

"A cleverly-concocted plan, you should say," replied the professor; "the language of you young men is anything but pure Saxon."

"That be bothered; we talk as all other boys talk," answered Dick. "Don't rile me just now. I am put out enough."

The professor took a little book from his pocket, and turning over the leaves, looked carefully at them.

"This is Walker's dictionary," he said; "it is received as an authority everywhere, and I cannot find the word 'rile' there. It must be slang."

"Go and hunt beetles," exclaimed Dick, angrily.

"That's unkind—more, it is rude. I appeal to Messiter if I deserve it," replied the professor.

"Oh! cut along and write books; that's all you're good for," answered Messiter.

"I am insulted," cried the professor; "it will be some time before I shall forget it."

"Haven't you the sense to see that we must look out for fighting to-night?" said Dick.

"Fighting? Bless me! I hope not. I am not a fighting man. What is going to happen?" exclaimed the professor, in alarm.

"What did we condemn Menzies to death for?"

"Planning a night attack."

"Exactly, and now he has escaped he will carry it out with Dugard."

"Ah! ah! I did not think of that."

"But somebody must think, my dear sir. It strikes me that we must be very careful. That fellow Sangaru has sold us once over to Menzies, and he is capable of doing it again."

"Well, well. *Pax*," said the professor, "I will not be angry with you, who are only boys after all."

"Thank you," replied Dick, satirically.

"I mean what I say. Your rudeness is forgiven. Make all preparations for the defense of the camp. I am not a man of war, and shall not interfere."

"You'll shoulder a rifle, sir, won't you?"

"No, no. Excuse me. It is not in my line. I will get up a tree, and do you some good there. I have a chemical compound which you will find of use. Leave me to my science. You go to your battle."

The tall, gaunt form of the professor disappeared under the canvas of his tent.

"He's gone to stick some wretched butterfly on a pin," said Messiter.

"Or skin a toad," suggested Dick.

"Those men are not much good when it comes to fighting," continued Messiter.

"I don't know. He's got a chemical box, and lots of drugs and things. He may do something. Science is a wonderful thing," answered Dick.

"I can see how it is," observed Messiter, after a pause; "Menzies got over Sangaru, who made his Pagazi fire high. He pretended to fall down dead, and then bolted."

"He will give us some trouble," replied Dick. "We must put the camp in order. If we are not attacked to-night, we shall be soon."

"Go and see Captain Vipond."

"I will. He knows he is in danger, and will do his best for our defense."

"We are stronger than they are in numbers, and well armed. What have we to funk?"

"A stray bullet, that's all. You would not like to lose me any more than I should you, and every bullet has its billet, the soldiers say."

"I don't think my ounce of lead is moulded yet," said Messiter.

"Let us hope not," said Dick.

He went to Captain Vipond's tent and had a long conversation with him.

The setting sun flooded all around in a sea of golden splendor.

Innumerable birds and insects fluttered and hummed in the long grass and trees.

Occasionally the hiss of a snake was heard as it glided away in the long grass.

In the distant forest the lion roared, and his loud voice found an echo in the far-off mountains.

It was arranged that the Pagazi should pretend to go to sleep as usual, but they should really keep awake with their arms by their side.

A strict watch was to be kept.

The professor was very busy in his tent, and had various things taken up in a tree and placed upon a fork, on which was put a board, which served him as a table.

Then with some difficulty he climbed up, and declared that he was ready for the enemy.

The time passed slowly.

Dick and Messiter patrolled the camp, one on each side, with unceasing vigilance.

A little clock in Vipond's tent struck the hour of twelve.

"Look out," said Dick.

"No fear," returned Messiter.

"Rather a difference this from being at school at Brighton."

"Rather."

"It's a funny world," continued Dick, the solitude and peculiarity of his position making him thoughtful. "Who'd have thought we should have been here three months ago?"

"Not I, for one," said Messiter.

"Wonder if we shall ever get back again."

There was a noise on the right side of the camp.

"Hush!" said Dick, under his breath.

"Did you hear that? Call Sangaru."

While he was speaking a shot whistled past his ear.

This awoke those of the Pagazi who were asleep in disobedience of orders.

All sprang to their feet and grasped their weapons.

The night attack had begun.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REPULSE.

OWING to the darkness of the night, and the skill with which the attack had been directed, it was impossible for the defenders of the camp to see their enemies.

All that could be done was to fire in the direction of the flashes of fire which came from guns discharged by the enemy.

Several Pagazi fell, and their comrades became alarmed; for though they would have fought bravely by daylight under white leaders, they had not sufficient stamina to stand and be shot at in the dark.

Messiter and Dick ran about encouraging the men, and firing whenever an opportunity presented itself.

Many a shriek and death-cry in the long, reedy grass outside the camp told that the shots went home.

"If the moon would only rise, and we could see," said Dick, "we should soon make short work of them."

Suddenly the professor cast something from his tree into the thick of the enemy.

As it struck the ground a brilliant white light burst forth, leaving the camp in darkness, but making all without as light as day.

Another and another followed, causing the utmost consternation among the astonished Pagazi.

"Hurrah!" cried Dick. "The professor is worth his salt, after all. Pepper away, my lads; give it them hot."

The tall, manly form of Harold Dugard could be seen exhorting his men to stand firm.

By his side was Menzies.

Many bullets were directed at their persons, but they seemed to bear a charmed life.

The Pagazi, however, fell thickly.

It was in vain that their leaders tried to lead them to the attack.

They threw down their arms, and ran for their lives, seeing that further fighting was useless.

At first they had only been hit at random. Now they were picked off like birds on the bough of a tree in winter.

Utterly confounded by the brilliant device of the professor, and deserted by his men, Dugard beckoned to Menzies, and together they disappeared in the darkness.

The attack was repulsed.

Captain Vipond breathed again, though he had hoped to see his enemy fall.

His loss amounted to seven men, and two donkeys shot by accident, while that of the enemy was nineteen.

By daybreak the dead were buried in a narrow trench, and the camp being struck, a forced march was made to get away from the vicinity of Dugard.

The professor was very proud of his exploit, and never tired of talking about it.

After this fight, another hundred miles were traversed, when it was requisite to call a halt.

Captain Vipond and Ted were down with the mukungurn, while Messiter was suffering from dysentery.

Several of the Pagazi were ill, and the demands for dowa, or medicine, which were made upon the professor's chest were frequent.

No longer did the men shout, "Sofari, pakia—a journey, start."

They were tired out and exhausted.

Water had been scarce, and they had slacked their thirst for muddy pools.

It was only by Dick's good health and energy that the caravan was kept together.

The men had heard of Dick's fight with the river horse, which was a great achievement in their eyes.

And as the native name for a hippo is kiboko, they nicknamed Dick Kiboko Bana, or Hippopotamus Master.

Dick was a great favorite with all, and as he had halted on the banks of a stream of good water, and was able to shoot some fresh meat, the spirits of all revived.

The whites now knew the horrible discomforts of African travel.

They were accustomed to fever, dysentery, flies, muddy water, ague, swamps, fording rivers, attacks by night, want of food, wild beasts, insolence and laziness of the carriers, with other trials.

Nothing more had been seen of Dugard.

But both Vipond and Dick knew the man too well to doubt that he was not far off.

While encamped, a slave gang came by from Unyanyembi.

There were sixty slaves in all, captured in war, and sold to the Arabs, who loaded them with chains.

It was a horrible sight to see the poor creatures' despairing faces and lack-lustre eyes.

But Dick was powerless to interfere, and contented himself with asking the leader the news.

This was an Arab named Abdallah, and he reported that there was a war going on between the Arabs of Unyanyembi, and the dreaded chief Mirambo.

"Who is this Mirambo?" asked Dick.

"He was once a robber in the forests, who attacked caravans. Now, Mashallah! he is a great warrior," replied Abdallah.

"Has he many men and arms?"

"More than we could count, and it was only by paying a large tribute, which I could not afford—Allah be good to me in trade!—that I got through at all with my slaves."

"What did you give Mirambo?"

"Three doti of Merikani, three of kaniki cloth, and two fundo of sami-sami, red beads."

A doti is about four yards of cloth and worth about ten and sixpence, which was not much after all.

"They tell me that Mirambo is joined by two Wasungi and five and twenty Pagazis," continued Abdallah.

"Two white men?" echoed Dick, in surprise.

"Yes, and he declares that no caravan shall pass through his land to Unyanyembi."

"That remains to be seen. What news from Ujiji?"

"I heard that a great white man was there without stores and sick, his men having deserted."

"It must be Livingstone," thought Dick.

The Arab took his leave, and the weary slaves marched along, a monotonous chant issuing from their lips.

Dick went to Captain Vipond, who was getting better from the fever, which seldom lasts more than three days, and told him the news.

"Do you think that those Wasungi, or white men, can be Dugard and Menzies?" asked Vipond.

"Not at all impossible. However, we must push on and chance it. We cannot stay here, and to go back would be absurd."

The captain was of the same opinion.

Dick next went to Ted, to whom he gave some medicine.

"How do you find yourself now?" he asked.

"Gallows bad, sir," replied Ted.

"Do you think you could ride on a donkey to-morrow?"

"I'll try, sir. This 'ere Africa don't agree with me; I'm only an odd boy, but I've got my feelings, and bust me if I don't wish I was out of it!"

Dick laughed and sought Sanguru, telling him that they would make a safari the next day, and ordering the men to have a double allowance of pemba, a spirit made by the natives, of which they had brought several gourds full.

When the men received the spirit they cried, "Hi, hi, hi! ha, ha, ha!" which are exclamations of joy.

Then they drank health to Kiboko Bana, the young hippopotamus master.

Dick smiled and busied himself with preparations for the morrow's march.

He felt that coming dangers were about to fall thick and fast upon them.

It was instinct.

If Dugard and Menzies were with the ferocious Mirambo, through whose country they were going to travel, perils were indeed ahead of them.

CHAPTER X.

MIRAMBO.

On the following day the caravan made another start.

The route lay through a splendid country, well watered and wooded; iron ore cropped up on the surface, and it was clear that if Europeans would settle there and make a railway from Bagamoyo to Unyanyembi, an immense trade might be done and a successful colony planted.

But this is a question of the future.

Perhaps the tempting population of Europe may yet find a vent and a resting place in East Central Africa.

On the third day's journey, as the caravan halted for refreshments at mid-day, a party of soldiers were descried.

Sanguru, who was alike guide and interpreter for the expedition, advanced.

After a short parley he returned to Dick.

"What do they want?" inquired the latter.

"They are the advanced guard of Mirambo's army," answered Sanguru.

"The deuce they are!"

"They say that we can proceed no further, and must give presents to Mirambo to be allowed to go back."

"Tell them they will have nothing from me," answered Dick, "and that I mean to push on."

"Pagazi won't fight, Bana," said Sanguru.

"Why not?"

"They much fear Mirambo, you see, Bana. I asked them."

Sanguru spoke to several of the Pagazi, who, with one accord, said, "Acuna, Kiboko Bana. Acuna, acuna (no, Hippopotamus Master. No, no)!"

Dick foamed with rage at the cowardly conduct of the carriers.

"Ask Mirambo's men what present will satisfy their master?" he said.

"They say leave that to you," answered Sanguru. "You great chief, very rich, able give much."

"Tell them they shall have fifty doti of merikani and sixty of kaniki, with twenty fundo of beads."

Sanguru went to the natives, and held another parley with them.

"They say that handsome present, Bana," he said, when he returned. "But they not able to make promise. Kiboko Bana must bring present of tribute himself, and make terms."

"Very well. How far off is Mirambo?"

"Six miles west."

"I'll go with them unarmed; or stay, I'll take Ted with me. He is better now, and he shall carry the flag. They will respect any envoy, I suppose," said Dick.

"I s'pose so, Bana. Not trust much, though. Better go back."

"I shan't," said Dick, obstinately. "We want to go on."

"Bana must have own way," said Sanguru, respectfully. "But Mirambo great rogue."

Dick's mind, however, was made up, and he resolved to go in person to Mirambo and negotiate.

Seeking Captain Vipond's tent, he told him how affairs stood.

"The Mirambo is the greatest and most warlike chief in the whole of this part of Africa," said Vipond, nervously.

"I know he is," replied Dick calmly.

"He has a large army." "Over ten thousand men, well armed." "And we have reason to suppose that Dugard and Menzies have joined him," continued Vipond.

"That's as safe as houses," answered Dick.

"Why put yourself in their power? I am obliged to you for courage. You know my sad history, and that Harold Dugard would do anything to obtain my body."

"He shan't have it."

"You think, then, that I am not so bad after all?"

"I don't think anything about that," replied Dick. "But I should like to know."

"Well, if you will have it," said Dick, "I think you are as big a villain as there is in the world, but you saved my life when you took me on board the *New Orleans*, and you are paying the expense of this expedition."

"You are blunt, young man," said Vipond, biting his lip.

"I can't tell lies. It isn't my fashion. Beside's it's much too trouble. The truth always comes out easier."

"At all events you will stick by me?"

"To the last."

"That is something. A large-hearted boy like you for a friend is worth a dozen hired men," said Vipond.

"I'm not your friend. Don't you run away with that idea."

"What then?"

"Simply your companion and the leader of this expedition, and as such it is my duty to do my best."

"Are you not afraid to put yourself in Dugard's and Mirambo's power?" asked Vipond.

"No. I want to make terms if I can."

"But if you can't."

"I shall gain time. If we were attacked here we should have no chance. You must break up the camp at once and retire to some hill, where you can throw

up stockades, and dig rifle pits. Entrench yourself strongly, and send me a message by a Pagazi to-morrow, stating where you are and all about you."

"Shall you not return to-day?"

"No. I shall certainly stay with Mirambo until to-morrow, perhaps longer, if the beggar won't let me go."

"If Dugard is with him, he will regard you as an enemy."

"My great hope is that Captain Dugard may be with Mirambo, for, whatever your difficulties may be with him, I have always found him a chivalrous gentleman."

Vipond wine d at this.

"You are bold, and your courage ought to be successful. Do you take any one with you?" he asked.

"Ted, if he is well enough."

"I fear not. Messiter came for some medicine just now. He has got a relapse."

"Then I'll go alone. Good-bye."

"God bless you!" exclaimed Vipond. "You are doing your best for me, I know."

They shook hands, and Dick, going to his tent, made a few preparations, and then joined the messengers of the dreaded chief Mirambo.

Their way laid through a fertile and well-wooded region, very different from the marshes and bogs they had lately traversed.

Here they found the lion and the zebra, the antelope, and the ostrich, instead of the boa and the scorpion, with all the tribe of slimy, crawling reptiles.

The latter frequented the regions of black, putrefying mud, and reveled in the damp and steaming neighborhoods of rivers.

It was a bold idea of Dick's to beard the lion in his den.

For Mirambo was reported to be as savage as he was clever.

He had traded with the merchants of Zanzibar, and made money.

English he could talk fluently.

But he found he could make himself richer and more famous by robbing caravans and levying war upon his neighbors than he could by honest trading.

It was said that he had killed his father in a fit of ungovernable passion.

And among other rumors respecting him was one that he had carried off a lovely English girl from the coast near Bagamoyo, whom he kept as his wife in the thickly-fenced city of Yamwezi.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK IN YAMWEZI.

The city of Yamwezi was one which contained about seven hundred inhabitants.

These lived in curiously-constructed huts, made of clay and stones, having round rather than conical, beehived roofs.

They were surrounded by a high palisade made of thick timber, almost bullet-proof.

But two gates gave entrance to the fortified city of Yamwezi.

One on the east side, the other on the north. The army of Mirambo was encamped outside the stockade, it being principally composed of the men of Yamwezi and the warriors from villages in the neighborhood.

This great chief, who is even now robbing caravans, and disturbing the interior of East Central Africa, had just repulsed the Arabs at Unyanyembi.

The Arabs were beaten with great slaughter, and this made his name more reputed than ever.

Among the peculiarities of Mirambo was his extreme superstition.

His constant companion was a Uganga, or medicine man, a fellow we should call a fortune-teller, or one divining by the stars.

His name was Sagazi.

The influence of this quack over his royal master resembled that of Galeotti, the astrologer over Louis XI.

Never did Mirambo undertake a war, or even a hunting party, without consulting his medicine man, Sagazi, who gave him various charms.

One of these was a talisman, made of a plant and sewn up carefully in a leathern bag, which was worn round the neck, suspended by a bit of yellow cloth.

In another bag was the tongue of a large boar, the ear of a zebra, the claw of a lion, a bit of the hoof of a giraffe, a portion of buffalo hide, and a dried golden beetle.

Sagazi told him that with those things about him he might be wounded in battle, but never killed.

A belief in this prediction made Mirambo the bravest and most foolhardy fighter in Africa.

It gained him a reputation for courage, and his men would follow him anywhere, while the terrified enemy fell back at the sight of the war-sword of the dreaded Mirambo.

The Uganga man could also predict the coming of rain, heal the sick, and was a very great man indeed.

In fact, he was a clever fellow, knowing the signs of the weather, having some knowledge of medicine, and a good collection of herbs to cure diseases with.

And last, but not least, his judgment was very shrewd and keen.

If the enemy were reported strong, he advised his royal master not to go to war.

If the clouds were thick and heavy, he said it would rain.

And so on.

In a word, he was a clever humbug and impostor.

Mirambo was standing outside his tent, talking to Sagazi, the Uganga, and expecting the return of his messengers to the white caravan.

Turning to the Uganga, he said:

"Shall I have a rich tribute from these whites?"

"Yes," replied Sagazi; "but in the end you will have all they have got."

"Why so?"

"Because they will offend you, and you will make war upon them."

Mirambo laughed.

"I do not make war upon a handful of men," he replied. "But whom have we here?"

His keen eyes descried a party of the men of Yamwezi leading in a prisoner.

He was a tall, ungainly-looking man, wearing spectacles.

When he approached, he looked angrily round him, and said, snappishly:

"Who's master here?"

"I," answered Mirambo.

"Oblige me by telling your men to let me alone, most noble savage," was the answer, "though, as you speak English, you must have some cultivation."

"I am Mirambo, and, when I have said that, what is the use of further words?"

"Indeed! Well, I am Professor Crab, and, while engaged in botanizing, your men seized me. I demand to be released at once, and I will tell you something of importance."

"What is that?" asked Mirambo.

"Your crops about here are dried up, but in an hour's time, or thereabouts, you will have a night's rain."

"Ha!" cried Mirambo, "can you make medicine like that? Are you a Uganga?"

"Look here," said the professor; "this is a glass to tell the weather with."

Mirambo grasped it and showed it to Sagazi, who shook his head and smiled incredulously.

"When that white substance, which we call quicksilver, rises," continued Mr. Crab, "it will be fine; when it sinks, it will rain or blow. You see how low it is now?"

"By my father Makololo!" cried Mirambo, "this is indeed medicine. Take him away; we will put him to the proof. If it rains before sunset, let him go free; if not, strike off his head."

A dozen Yamwezi seized him, much to his indignation.

He was forced into a tent, where four men kept guard over him, two with drawn swords and two with loaded guns.

Mirambo contemplated the glass with the pleasure a child looks upon a new toy.

Suddenly a beating of native drums and a clashing of cymbals announced the return of the messengers of the caravan.

Dick, carrying the British flag, was brought before Mirambo.

"Who is this?" demanded the king.

"I am the leader of an expedition from which you demand tribute. If you are Mirambo," replied Dick, "but perhaps you do not understand me?"

"I speak English," was the answer. "What tribute do you propose to give?"

"How much do you want?"

"One hundred dots of merikani, a hundred of kaniki, and a hundred of fundo of beads."

"It is too much," said Dick; "I cannot give half that."

"Ha!" screamed Mirambo. "You dare to refuse me?"

"Yes. I am not afraid of any insolent tyrant. You are a well-known robber, but our guns are a match for your army."

Mirambo foamed at the mouth with rage.

"Hang him up to the nearest tree," he cried, "and let my army prepare to march against his friends."

Dick did not understand this, because it was spoken in the native dialect.

But when a stout cord was placed round his neck by half-a-dozen grinning savages, he knew something was wrong.

"Take care what you are about," he said; "I am a British subject, and my Queen will revenge my death."

Mirambo snapped his fingers.

"That for your Queen," he said. "She will not waste her money and her men in sending after me here in Africa. What is your life to her? Pah! I have been to the coast. I know all about England and her Queen."

The rope was thrown round a branch, several hands seized the loose end, and Dick thought his last hour was come.

"I came here," he said, "as a messenger. Are you such a ruffian as not to respect an envoy?"

"What's that to me?" asked Mirambo.

While Dick's life was hanging on the balance, a white man emerged from a tent, with a stately step.

He approached Mirambo.

"This must not be," he said; "keep him a captive in Yamwezi, if you will, but shed no blood."

"Why should you interfere, Bana?" asked Mirambo, surlily.

"He is my friend. Let that be enough. I leave you at once if my request is not complied with."

Mirambo hesitated, and bit his thumb-nail.

"Nay," continued the speaker, "I will do more. See you this revolver? It holds twelve lives in its barrels. I will shoot you through the heart, and yonder curs also."

"It is not well that we should have differences," Turning to his men, he continued: "His life is saved; take him into our city of Yamwezi."

The soldier loosened the noose and removed the rope, motioning to Dick to march towards the city.

"A narrow squeak that," muttered Dick, rubbing his neck.

As he was being taken away, he saw the features of his preserver, who was Harold Dugard.

The latter seemed to wish to avoid any conversation with him.

"He's done me a good turn, and I won't forget him," thought Dick.

They led him into the stockaded city through the eastern gate, and placed him in a lower room of a hut, which was superior to most others in its having two floors, and an enclosure of ground or garden about it.

In half-an-hour the rain descended in torrents, and the professor was set at liberty to walk home through the drenching downpour.

"The brutes," he said to himself; "I told them it was going to rain, and they might as well have lent me an umbrella."

He regained his camp in safety, and related his adven-

ture amidst some laughter, though he could give no account of Lighthouse, not having heard of or seen him.

The rain lasted all night, but towards morning the sky cleared, the sun broke out, and a steaming mist arose from the damp, soddened ground.

Captain Vipond gave orders to march.

The camp was struck, and he, with Messiter and the professor, went in front to select a good place for defensive purposes, as Dick suggested.

They found this on the summit of a hill, which had a river with a swift stream, but of small breath, running at its base.

Here they made every preparation for an energetic resistance if attacked.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIDDEN QUEEN.

AFTER refreshing himself with the fare provided for him, Dick began to look round his prison.

A window opening to the ground gave him a view of the garden, which had a wall as high as that of the neighboring huts, for they did not deserve the name of houses.

Trees and flowers grew in rich profusion, without any plan or arrangement.

From under one of the most leafy of the trees came a tinkling sound, as of a guitar.

A low, sweet voice sang a plaintive sad song, which thrilled Dick to the heart, for the words were English, and he could not doubt that the songstress was a countrywoman, perhaps a captive like himself.

Pushing open the window, the door only being guarded, he stepped gently forth, and walked boldly to the spot from whence the music came.

At the sound of his footsteps the singing ceased, and as he came in sight, a tiny scream informed him that he had startled the fair musician.

Before him, upon a bed of grass and leaves, lay a lovely English girl, her beautiful eyes moist with tears recently shed.

Her long hair streaming over her shoulders, black and glossy as a raven's wing, allowed the zephyr to wanton through its tresses.

The silken eyelashes were raised in wonder at the sight of the manly, openfaced English boy.

A plain white muslin robe, girdled round her waist by a rich blue silk sash, served to set off the symmetry of her peerless form.

"Don't be alarmed," exclaimed Dick. "I am a friend, and beg pardon for coming upon you so suddenly."

"How did you get here?" asked the lady.

"I am a captive in the hands of Mirambo, and I suppose they have put me on the ground floor of what he is pleased to call his palace, while you occupy the attics. But allow me to ask what on earth a lovely creature like yourself is doing in the house of a savage thief?"

"You may well ask," she answered, sadly. "My name is Alice. I am the daughter of a English merchant at Zanzibar, whose name is Mr. John Smiles, but owing to his immense size and strength, and his success in hunting big game, every one calls him Sampson Jack."

"And the wife of Mirambo?"

"No, thank Heaven. I have resisted all his efforts to make me that," she replied, with a shudder.

"How did you come here?" asked Dick.

"During one of my father's hunting parties, I accompanied him to Bagamoyo, and I was stolen from the house of a rich Banian where I was staying, and taken through the jungle to this walled city of Yamwezi."

"Have you been here long?"

"About six weeks, as well as I can reckon, though I have been unable to count properly."

"I have heard of you from the natives as the Hidden Queen of Mirambo," said Dick.

"Rather would I die than be that wretch's wife," she continued; "my only hope is in Heaven and my father."

"Will he rescue you?"

"I know that he will never rest until he has made the attempt. Oh, Mirambo does not know my father. Well versed in African travel, and bold as a lion, he will hunt after me like a bloodhound after a runaway slave."

"Thank you for your confidence," said Dick. "I am a perfect stranger to you, but rest assured I will do what I can for you."

"Alas! you are a prisoner like myself," said the unfortunate Alice. "What can you do?"

"I'm a very peculiar sort of fellow," answered Dick, with a smile, "or else I should not now be in the wilds of Africa."

"What is your object?"

"Trading, principally, with some friends; and also a wish to discover Dr. Livingstone."

"Ah! the brave, good man," cried Alice. "I saw him four years since at Zanzibar. He is, indeed, a fine, large-hearted Christian gentleman."

"Perhaps we shall yet discover the sources of the Nile together and settle the question of the East African water-shed, visit the dwellers underground, and do a few other trifles," replied Dick, with a smile.

"I hope you may; but tell me, if I am not too inquisitive, how you came to fall into Mirambo's power?"

"I went into his camp to settle a question of tribute, as our caravan wants to pass through his dominion to Unyanyembi, and so on to Ujiji, where Livingstone is reported to be."

"Well?"

"Well, I offended his savage highness, who threatened to hang me. I escaped by a fluke, and am a prisoner of state. By the way, are those water lemons growing over there in that bed?"

"Yes, I think so," answered Alice.

"And peaches on those trees?"

"Yes."

"I'll have a fuck-in, for I'm jolly thirsty. Will you do ditto?" asked Dick.

"I am too miserable to take any interest in anything, and only eat to keep body and soul together," replied Alice, mournfully.

"That's a mistake. Never say die. What would you say if you were shut up in a wonderful ship that went under the sea, and went out shark hunting, and got stuck in the ice near the Pole, and got accustomed to your hair standing on end with funk every ten minutes?"

"All that would be better than my condition," answered Alice, looking at him curiously.

"Don't you put your pretty self in a flutter," continued Dick. "You shan't be Mrs. Mirambo."

"Perhaps, Mr. ———, you did not tell me your name."

"Lighthouse. Rather more suggestive than elegant as a name; but still, it is what my father had before me, and not my choice."

"Perhaps, Mr. Lighthouse," she went on, with a tinge of coquetry, "you would like me to be Mrs. Somebody-else?"

"Not the least bit in the world," replied Dick, with his hands full of peaches. "Have a peach? Catch. Well done! No, butterfingers! There, a clean, neat catch, like the man at slip when the cove at the wicket gives him half a chance."

"You are a funny boy, Mr. Lighthouse," said Alice, amused in spite of herself.

"Funny is not the word," he answered. "Try a slice of melon."

"Well, you are peculiar."

"That's all right. Now listen to me, Miss Alice Smiles; I'm not ambitious of being your lord and master, because I have a little pet of my own at home, but I'll be like a brother to a sister to you."

"Thank you," added Alice, feeling disappointed that her beauty had made no greater impression upon the handsome lad, who was at one and the same time as cool as a cucumber and as daring as a lion.

"I have friends in the neighborhood who won't leave me in the hole, if your governor, Sampson Jack, doesn't find you out, and I'll bet we warm Mirambo between us."

"I hope he will not find you talking to me. The wretch is wicked enough to kill us both."

Dick opened his shirt, and showed the butt of a small revolver.

"I'll make that speak to him," he said, "if he comes any nonsense over us; and as I'm the ground floor lodger and as you've got the first pair front, sing out like steam if he tries his game on."

"I will," she added, profoundly thankful.

"I'll be there," said Dick, sucking his melon.

"Hush!" she exclaimed, "I hear some one at the garden gate. It is Mirambo."

"Mirambo?" repeated Dick, in dismay.

"Yes, it is his custom to enter that way when he comes to make what he calls love to me. For Heaven's sake, hide yourself."

Dick made a few antelope-like bounds to the house, darted through the window, shut it, and was soon once more in his prison.

It would have been folly to have bearded Mirambo.

Nor would it have done the Hidden Queen any good.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAMPSON JACK.

PROFESSOR CRAB had imbibed a great contempt for the native Pagazi.

He said they were lazy, cowardly, and thieves.

They irritated him beyond endurance, and swearing not being one of his accomplishments, he had to invent a word to express his disgust.

This was "poof," and whenever he was annoyed he said, "Poof! I am a Saxon; these dog-faced rascals are worse than pigs."

The day after the camp was moved the professor and Messiter went out together.

It was the professor's purpose to collect specimens of flowers, shrubs and herbs, with any rare animal life he might meet with, such as beetles, butterflies, etc.

Messiter meant to shoot large game if he could find it.

The Pagazi had reported giraffe, elephant and rhinoceros in the neighborhood.

While it was known that the boa constrictor lurked in the long grass fringing the river, and twined in the boughs which overhung the forest bordering the stream.

Ted accompanied them, bearing two guns, loaded, to hand to Messiter if he should miss his first shot.

They were Lancaster rifles, loaded with the Frazer shell, which could drop an elephant at ten or a dozen paces if the ball was planted in his skull.

Climbing up and down inclines, clambering over grass-grown ant-hills, and struggling through reedy grass which came up to their necks, they at last espied a herd of giraffes plucking the green branches of the trees with their long and graceful necks outstretched.

"Gently," said Messiter, knowing that the giraffe is as timid as a deer when aroused, and can dart out of sight like a flash of lightning almost.

"Poof!" said the professor; "I am a Saxon. Do you think I am afraid of a long-legged, long-necked nothing like that? Poof!"

Concealing himself behind an ant-hill, Messiter threw himself down and fired.

The giraffe had one of its legs broken, but he raised away.

It had not gone far before a second shot reached its heart, and it measured its length on the grassy plain.

"Poof!" said the professor, "two shots to kill a thing like that."

"You wouldn't have done it in a dozen," said Messiter proudly, as he walked up to the noble creature, feeling very much elated at having killed such kingly game.

"Poof!" said the professor; "I am a Saxon; Ted, give me some of that stuff the rascally natives distil as liquor."

It had become noticeable that since he had had an attack of fever, the professor had drank very much more than he had ever done before.

"Pretty scenery," he said, as he put down the gourd, "I rather like life in Africa. Poof! what's that?"

In a tree over his head was something half dark, half yellowish, and glittering.

It kept moving about the branches, rustling the leaves and shaking the tree.

Two bright, glistening eyes stared out at him, like an electric light at sea on a dark night.

"A snake, by Jove," said Messiter. "Look out, sir." "Poof!" said the professor, "I didn't bargain for snakes, and I don't think I like Africa quite so well as I thought."

"It's a boa constrictor," cried Messiter, "by its size, by gum! Its body is as thick round as a man's thigh." "Yes," said the professor. "It is the famous boa of Africa—not poisonous, but when it throws its folds around a stag, or even an elephant, it can crush their carcasses into pulp."

"Get out of the way, sir," said Messiter.

"Poof! I am a Saxon!" exclaimed Mr. Crab, who was made bold by the palm spirit. "Who's afraid? Poof!"

He began a fantastic dance under the tree.

This seemed to irritate the huge snake, which detached a part of its body from the branches.

Quick as lightning, it swung its folds round the unlucky professor.

This was like the twining of the lash of a whip round a post.

Mr. Crab yelled desperately, and struggled fiercely to free himself.

But in vain.

"Help! help!" he cried. "Poof! I am being doubled up. Poof! poof! I can't breathe."

"Remember you're a Saxon, sir," said Messiter.

"Bother Saxons! Poof! He is trying to drag me up into the tree. Cut him down. Poof!"

Messiter drew his knife, and rushed upon the snake, whom he slashed at, drawing the dark, streaming blood, without doing much harm.

The snake, seeing another enemy, immediately let his head and the upper part of his body fall to the ground.

Before Messiter could escape, he was in the dreadful coils.

Professor Crab was held tightly by the tail part, and Messiter was surrounded by four coils of the head or upper part.

The boa's huge, flat head flung itself about in the air. Its forked tongue darted in and out.

The eyes glowed like burning coals.

It was an awful moment, and Messiter gave himself up for lost, but, disengaging his right hand, he again used his knife.

Owing to the tightness with which the snake was coiled, and the constant squeezes he gave his prey, it was difficult to move or breathe.

Messiter felt his ribs crack.

The perspiration burst out from every pore in his body.

His eyes were starting from their sockets.

The professor kept on saying "Poof!" and cried dismally for help.

Messiter could only stab the reptile, whereas he ought to have cut him in half, but he could not get free play for his hand and arm.

The pricks of the knife only enraged the boa without disabling him.

In a few moments it seemed as if all would be over.

Messiter was gradually sinking.

A tightness round his chest warned him of approaching suffocation.

Suddenly there was a shout.

He looked up, while hope struggled with despair in his dim and bloodshot eyes.

"Hold on there!" cried an English voice; "I'm in this."

The next minute a tall, strapping man rushed upon the snake with a sharp knife.

One vigorous blow cut the loathsome thing in half.

The head and the tail relaxed their folds at the same time, and fell to the earth.

Here they twisted and writhed, while fearful hisses came from the dying boa.

The stranger fired a revolver into the head, and seizing the professor and Messiter one with each hand, carried them, as if they had been children, to a grassy knoll.

For a brief space they were too much exhausted to speak.

"Well," said the stranger, "as sure as my nickname is Sampson Jack, that's the biggest serpent I've seen since I've been vagabondising in these parts. He's a regular whopper, and no mistake."

When the professor and Messiter had recovered from their fright and the severe hugging they had endured they thanked Sampson Jack for his timely rescue.

"Say no more," he said.

"But we shall never be able to return your kindness," said Messiter.

"Yes, you will. You are here with a caravan, I suppose!"

"We are. And you?"

"I've come to fight Mirambo. He stole my daughter, the richest heiress in Zanzibar."

"Really," said Messiter; "perhaps we shall have a go-in at Mirambo on our own account."

"How's that?"

"We have sent our best man to arrange the tribute, and if the messenger does not come back to-day, we shall think there is something wrong."

"Bravo! the more the merrier!" cried the giant Sampson Jack. "I've got a battery of six cannons, and English sailors to serve them, which will make us a match for the savage villain. Give me your hands. We are in the same swim, I can see."

They shook hands heartily.

Sampson Jack then led them to his party, who were encamped a little way off.

He had been attracted to their help by the cries of the professor.

English beer in bottle awaited them, and as he drank it, Mr. Crab said:

"Poof! I was not afraid of the snake. In two minutes I should have killed him. You came too quickly, sir. Poof! After all, an African boa is a contemptible worm in the hands of a Saxon."

"You're lucky, my man, not to be in the worm's belly by this time," replied Sampson Jack, "so give us no gas."

This rebuke silenced the professor.

After they had refreshed themselves, Sampson Jack accompanied them to Captain Vipond to organize an alliance against Mirambo.

CHAPTER XIV.

THROWN TO THE LION.

ON the day following Dick's interview with the pretty Alice, he again walked in the garden.

It was his hope that he might meet with her.

In this expectation he was disappointed.

She did not make her appearance.

While he was walking about, plucking the fruit, and wondering how long his captivity would last, he heard an English voice.

"Master Dick," it said.

Turning round he looked up and down, but could see no one.

"Who spoke?" he cried.

"This way, sir," was the reply.

Casting his eyes to the palisade, he beheld the face and hands of a dark-colored boy, who was hanging on the palings which ran round the garden.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Don't you know me, Master Dick? I'm only an odd boy, but I've got—"

"Is it you, Ted?" asked Dick, in surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"What have you done to your mug?"

"I've altered it, sir to get into this blessed town of Yamwezi, and I've had a job, I can tell you."

"How did you find me out?"

"By listening to Menzies talking to that captain cove. They've got a tent outside."

"I know they have," said Dick.

"Menzies wants to have you killed, but captain cove won't have it by no means. Can I come down?"

"Yes, jump over and chance it," said Dick.

In a moment Ted had drawn himself up and lightly descended on the other side.

"What's the news, Ted?" said Dick, as he shook him warmly by the hand.

"We're going to make an attack on Mirambo," answered Ted.

"Nonsense. Are you strong enough?"

Just at that moment the garden gate opened slowly.

The swarthy form of Mirambo appeared, but neither of the boys noticed him.

Seeing that there were two persons in his private garden, the savage king advanced angrily.

But when the words "attack Mirambo" fell upon his ears, he changed his mind.

With a craftiness peculiar to himself, he crept behind a tree.

Here he was safely concealed and within earshot.

It was his intention to listen.

"I'll tell you all about it, Master Dick," continued Ted, "but I must begin at the beginning."

"Cut along."

"Don't you hurry me, sir, or I shall forget something," said Ted, scratching his head.

"Take your time."

"You see, sir, it was Master Messiter that sent me to you."

"What for?"

"He got anxious when you didn't return, and we've had a reinforcement, I think he called it."

"All the better," remarked Dick.

"Have you seen a young lady here, named Alice?" asked Ted.

"The daughter of Sampson Jack, of Zanzibar?"

"That's her."

"Yes, I have."

"That old thief Mirambo carried her off," said Ted.

"He did?"

If they could have seen Mirambo's face twitch convulsively with rage, they would not have conversed so much at their ease.

But this was lost upon them.

"Sampson Jack's joined us, with several men, a lot of English sailors, and six cannon," continued Ted.

"Hurrah for him!" cried Dick. "Cannon is just what we want to fight niggers with."

"He's after his daughter, and he's offered a hundred pounds reward for Mirambo's head."

"I'll have that money, if I get a chance," said Dick.

Mirambo, at hearing this, trembled violently, but not with fear.

His emotion was the anger of a wild beast.

"I shall have a try for it," replied Ted, adding, "Master Messiter wanted me to help you to escape, if I could, and if not, to tell you the attack would be made to-morrow night, so that you might, if possible, get out and help us a bit when you hear the guns firing."

"Thank you, Ted," said Dick; "I'll do my best, but I can't get away now. Tell our friends that my life is safe."

"Is it?" muttered Mirambo, between his teeth.

"I must get back then," said Ted. "I'm not at all comfortable, though I have stained my face and body and put on a nigger's dress, if you can call a bit of cotton dress."

Dick laughed.

"Good-bye, Ted; God bless you," he exclaimed. "I hope you'll get away all right. Are you armed?"

"No; I haven't even a pocket to put a revolver in."

"Of course you haven't; I forgot that. Take care of yourself, and thank you for coming."

"I'm only an old boy, sir, but I've got my feelings, and I shall never forget your kindness to me."

"Rot," said Dick; "I owe you quite as much as you do me."

"Ah! I don't know about that. You saved my life on the beach at Brighton, when I hadn't a friend or a crust of bread to eat."

"I've never been sorry for it, Ted."

"And you never shall, sir. It's my belief an act of kindness is never thrown away."

"I think not."

"Tell you a curious thing," continued Ted. "Yesterday, in the forest, I heard a beast yelping and going on. It was a lion, and at first I thought I'd pot it, but it seemed in pain, and I went up to it cautiously."

"To a lion?"

"Yes, sir. Well, it's a funny thing, but I've got my feelings, Master Dick."

"So you said before."

"The lion was a-limping, sir, on three legs, and I saw he'd got one of those acacia thorns in the ball of his foot."

"That wasn't your fault," said Dick.

"Perhaps it was his. However, he let me come up quite close, and I said, 'Poor lion! gently, lad, to soothe him.'"

"It's a wonder he didn't eat you."

"Not he. He was too bad. What do you think he did?"

"Can't tell."

"He held up his paw," continued Ted, "and I wasn't at all funky. I pulled out the thorn, and he licked my hand for it. That's a fact."

"I won't say I don't believe it," answered Dick, "but it's one of the toughest yarns I've had to swallow for ever so long."

"Take my gospel oath of it," exclaimed Ted, indignantly.

"Never mind. Cut off. Remember me to all, and say I'll listen for the guns, and see what I can do. They've made me a prisoner, but I've got my wits about me."

Ted was about to run for the wall, when the tall, commanding form of Mirambo emerged from his place of concealment.

In his hand he held a sword, which he did not take any pains to hide.

"Mirambo!" exclaimed Dick.

"Yes," answered the king; "and, by the bones of my ancestors, I will make you repent what you have been saying."

"Ancestors?" exclaimed Dick, scornfully. "I shouldn't think you had any."

"My family is ancient," said Mirambo. "Beware how you irritate me."

"Shake hands, old cock," continued Dick. "I don't want to cut off your head, and shouldn't like to hurt you."

While he was chaffing the king, he made a sign to Ted to be off.

It was to enable the lad to escape that he tried to banter Mirambo.

But the latter was too clever for him.

He saw the sign, and made a spring upon Ted, threatening him with his sword.

Dick broke down a stout bough from a tree.

Armed with this, he ran up just in time to beat down the tyrant's sword.

"No, you don't," he exclaimed.

Strong as Mirambo was, he had no knowledge of fencing.

Dick, however, could fence pretty well, and when Mirambo turned upon him, trying to cut him down with his sword, he parried his cuts very skillfully.

Ted sank on his knees, and crawling towards Mirambo, put his head between his legs, seized his shins with each arm, and giving a jerk, caused him to fall backwards.

In an instant Dick was upon him.

He snatched the sword from his hand, and stood over him.

The powerful Mirambo was helpless before the two boys.

"Very neatly done, Ted," exclaimed Dick.

"It wasn't bad, sir, was it?" said Ted, complacently.

"The luck is against me," exclaimed Mirambo, with a grim smile.

"You can't expect to have it all your own way. Very annoying, though, isn't it?" said Dick, mockingly.

"What do you want as the price of my life?" asked Mirambo.

"Instant liberty for myself and Ted, as well as for a young English lady you have here, a prisoner."

"It is granted."

"On your honor?"

"On the faith of Mirambo."

Dick was satisfied.

He fancied he detected on his face a crafty look, but to this he attached no importance until afterwards.

At present he was too young in African warfare to have learnt to distrust the word of a great chief.

He did not know that Mirambo, though brave and daring, was at the same time a thorough liar, whose pledged word was not worth half a fundo of red beads.

Putting his sword across his knee, he broke it in half.

Mirambo ran to the house.

Clapping his hands, he shouted:

"Hi! hi! Sagazi. Hi! hi!"

In an instant a door opened, and Sagazi, the medicine man, at the head of a dozen native soldiers, rushed into the garden.

These formed the private or body guard of the king.

"Seize the Wasungu (white man)!" continued Mirambo.

Escape was impossible.

With a groan Dick saw that he was deceived, and had foolishly trusted to the good faith of a man who did not know what truth was.

The soldiers grasped him and Ted firmly.

"Take the youngest outside the city," continued Mirambo; "in an hour's time he shall be thrown to the lion we caught in the nets this morning."

At this speech, the soldiers' faces were lighted up with a fierce joy.

They were promised a spectacle which appealed strongly to their cruel natures.

It was to be a feast of blood.

As for Dick and Ted, they knew nothing, as they did not understand the dialect in which the king spoke.

"I cannot kill the big one," continued Mirambo, "as

the Wasungu Bana, Captain Dugard, my ally, has bargained for his life."

"Let him see his friend torn from limb to limb, that will be as bad," suggested the medicine man.

"Well said. Bind him, and take him with the other to the lion's pit."

"It shall be done, master," answered Sagazi.

"How many lions have we?"

"Only the one caught this morning."

"True. The others were killed in the last fight with elephants we amused ourselves with."

"That was so," said Sagazi.

"Away with them. I am going to see the captive maiden. In an hour's time I shall be ready."

With these words, Mirambo, the cruel and blood-thirsty, stroke away.

He turned and bent a vindictive look upon the boys.

Dick returned it with one of defiance.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FEAST OF BLOOD.

THERE was a deep, well-like pit outside the fortified town of Yamwezi.

In this were placed the lions which the king's huntsmen caught alive in nets or traps.

The great amusement of the chief men of Yamwezi was to behold a combat between a lion and an elephant, or a lion and a tiger, or sometimes a lion and a crocodile.

This was to them what a bull-fight is to the Spaniards of the present day.

Or what a contest between gladiators was to the ancient Romans.

Sometimes great culprits were thrown to the lions, and the whole court would assemble to see them torn to pieces.

There was but one lion in the pit at present.

This had quite recently been caught.

Dick and Ted had their arms bound behind their backs.

They were marched, carefully guarded, out of the garden.

The people of Yamwezi looked curiously at them as they passed through the streets.

But those benighted savages were so accustomed to scenes of blood and deeds of violence that, though they guessed the boys were going to execution, they did not exhibit any sympathy.

"Master Dick," said Ted.

"What?"

"Isn't that Mirambo a lying old thief?"

"Rather. That name's too good for him," replied Dick.

"Weren't you a flat not to give him a good bye up with the sword when you had the chance?"

"I was worse than an idiot."

"You was so," said Ted, thoughtfully.

"Wait till I get another chance. But who was to think he'd behave like that?" replied Dick, bitterly.

In a short time they quitted the city by one of the gates, and reached the plain on which the army was encamped.

Although the sun had passed the meridian, the heat was intense.

The rays of the sun poured down with a fury that is only to be met with in tropical regions.

The boys were halted within a few yards of the pit, in which the lion was kept.

Round this were erected two rows of wooden seats like benches.

Here were accommodated the chief officers of the army and the household.

Meaner persons were allowed to crowd round and look on as best they could.

To Dick's great satisfaction he saw a white man emerge from his tent.

A glance sufficed to show him that it was Captain Dugard.

He approached Dick.

"What is the cause of your being here?" he inquired. Dick explained in a few words.

"I have pledged my word that your life shall be held sacred," replied Dugard, "and I do not think Mirambo wishes to quarrel with me."

"Not he, sir," answered Dick.

"If it were not for my influence your life would not be worth a minute's purchase."

"You will protect Ted, sir?" said Dick.

"No. I have nothing to do with him," said Dugard, coldly.

"Will you let Mirambo kill him?"

"If he likes."

But he is one of your own race and blood. He is in a foreign country. One word from you would save him."

"It shall not be spoken."

"Why not?" exclaimed Dick, indignantly.

"Ted is a bad boy. He tried to take my life. Let him perish."

"I wish my hands were not tied; I'd have a good try to save him."

"What could you do against hundreds, foolish boy?"

"Hiding among savages seems to have made you as bad as they are," said Dick.

"Be silent, or I may withdraw my protection from you," said Dugard.

The dark frown which Dick knew so well came over his face.

"I don't care if you do," cried Dick. I hate cruelty, and you know Ted is my servant and friend. I would as soon die myself as see him killed."

"Don't worry about me, sir," said Ted; "that captain cove and I never were friends."

"Tell me one thing?" asked Dick.

"Well?"

"What are they going to do with the lad?"

"Throw him to the lions, to make what they call a feast of blood."

"Horrible," said Dick. "Is it possible?"

"Daniel in the lions' den," said Ted, attempting a smile, though he was in reality very much alarmed.

Captain Dugard walked away.

"Scarcely had he gone when Ted exclaimed, "Look out, Master Dick."

"What for?"

"Here's Menzies."

Turning round, Dick saw his enemy walking up rapidly.

His little ferret eyes gleamed with a malignant satisfaction.

"Hullo, Lightheart," he exclaimed. In for it at last, are you?"

"Fish and find out," said Dick.

"They say the lion is going to have a tuck-out."

"Perhaps."

"Won't I look on and laugh while you holler! Won't I just, that's all," said Menzies.

"You're bad enough for anything," said Dick.

"That what you say. Hullo, Ted, are you in for it too?"

"Ax," answered Ted, sullenly.

"Here's a lark," said Menzies, dancing about for joy; "we haven't had any excitement for a week, since Mirambo burnt six men to death for mutiny. It's a god-send."

"All right, my boy. Wait till my turn comes," said Dick, biting his lips.

Menzies, in his dance, came a little too near Dick, who raised his foot and kicked him as hard as he could.

Uttering a howl of pain and putting his hands behind him, Menzies said, "What did you do that for?"

"Cheek," answered Dick. "If I can't hit I can kick."

Menzies was coward enough to have struck Dick in the face, bound as he was.

But fortunately the guards saw the king approaching, and removed the prisoners.

They were placed in the first row of seats, in a little box, which was a sort of condemned cell.

The lion could be seen in the pit, looking up, lashing his sides with his tail, and licking his mouth.

Occasionally he gave utterance to deep roars, which found an echo half a mile off.

Ted trembled.

"Keep up your pluck, old fellow," whispered Dick; "unfortunately I can't help you, but there is Ole above."

"I'm all right, Master Dick," replied Ted.

Mirambo speedily took his place on a rude throne which was erected for him.

The principal officers of the court and army placed themselves on the seats.

The soldiery and the inhabitants of Yamwezi crowded round as well as they could.

All were anxious to get a good view of the sanguinary spectacle.

Dick noticed that, though Menzies was in the second row of seats, Captain Dugard did not appear.

He had too much humanity in his composition to wish to see a fellow-creature torn to pieces and devoured by a wild beast.

At a sign from the king, two soldiers seized Ted, and unbound his arms.

Holding him over the side, they gently lowered him into the pit.

"God help him, poor fellow," sighed Dick.

It was an awful moment.

Even the savages held their breath.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MIRACLE.

EVERY neck was craned and every head bent forward as the boy sank into the pit.

The lion advanced to his prey with a roar.

The majestic brute had been kept without food for the purpose of making him more savage.

All at once he stopped.

Instead of rending the lad limb from limb, he smelt his body, as a dog might that of his master.

Then he licked his hands affectionately, and sank passive at his feet.

Ted patted his neck without showing any fear.

A hoarse murmur arose from the crowd.

The king sprang to his feet.

Turning to his favorite Sagazi, he said, "This is medicine indeed."

The Uganga was stupefied.

"What manner of boy is this," he exclaimed, "who can tame a wild beast?"

"Mungu, the Almighty protects him. Give him life and liberty," shouted the crowd.

At first Dick was at a loss to understand this extraordinary occurrence.

But a moment's reflection recalled to his mind the story that Ted had told him in the garden.

He did not doubt that the lion was the same animal whom Ted had found in the forest, and from whose foot Ted had extracted a spike of the thorny acacia.

It showed that, savage as was the nature of the lion, he could be capable of gratitude.

The superstitious character of the Yamwezians was profoundly affected.

"Give him life and let him go free," they cried. Mirambo consulted with the Uganga.

"You must not anger the soldiers," said Sagazi.

"But this boy has seen our army and defenses; he will go back and report to our enemies," replied Mirambo.

"My lord is strong enough to laugh at the beads of those white men."

"Not so; they have cannon."

"What of that? Is not our master brave in battle?"

"But I have overheard their plans. To-morrow night they attack us in force."

"All the more reason why the prisoner should be released," answered Sagazi. "Our soldiers regard this as a miracle."

"Curses on the lion," growled Mirambo.

"Hark at the crowd; they cry with one voice, 'It is the will of Mungu, the All-wise.'"

With a bad grace Mirambo gave orders that Ted be taken up out of the pit.

Ropes were lowered, by means of which he was raised.

Mirambo addressed him:

"Go," he exclaimed; "you are free; your Mungu has protected you."

"Lowering his voice, he added:

"Beware how you fall into my hands again!"

Directing one look of advice at Dick, the lad darted through the crowd and started off at a quick pace across the plain.

Menzies was much disappointed.

"That's what I call a sell," he exclaimed. "Bother that stupid old lion; I guess he's gorged."

Dick was ordered back to his former prison, only having been brought out to witness the cruel death of his friend.

The wicked mind of Mirambo thought that this would be almost as great a punishment to him as death itself.

A brave mind does not shrink from death, but it does from the contemplation of torture.

During the remainder of that day Dick in vain tried to see Alice.

Perhaps she was confined to her apartments.

The next day he beheld her in the garden.

She was playing upon an instrument resembling a guitar, and her song was of love.

Gently stepping forth, he joined her.

With an exclamation of pleasure she held out her hand to Dick.

"I am so pleased to see you," she exclaimed. "That terrible scene in the garden yesterday with Mirambo alarmed me dreadfully."

"My companion is safe," answered Dick, "and I am unhurt."

"That is good news."

"I have intelligence for you," he said.

"Indeed?"

"Your father is close by; he has joined my party with a force of English and six guns."

"Noble man!" she cried. "I knew he would not desert me."

"To-morrow night they make the attack. I wish I could fire a shot to help them."

"You are safe here," said Alice. "Think of the danger you are exposed to in warfare."

"I love danger," he answered.

"Perhaps you have some dear one at home who loves you. For her sake you should be prudent."

"I have. My darling Henrietta loves me, but she would not wish me to skulk when my friends are risking their lives."

A shade of disappointment seemed to steal over Alice's beautiful face.

Did she already love the handsome English boy?

"Ah! it is well to be loved!" she sighed.

"And have you no one to love you?" he asked.

"No. My father excepted, I am alone in the world."

"You are young and lovely. There is plenty of time yet," said Dick.

She shook her head with a sad smile.

Fearing the coming of Mirambo, they did not prolong the conversation.

Dick retired to his prison, and anxiously awaited the fall of night.

Mirambo busied himself all day in making the camp as strong as possible.

The soldiers were informed that they might expect a night attack.

A double allowance of spirits—that is, pombi, or palm wine—was served out to them.

They sang weird songs and brandished their weapons.

Mirambo had so often led them to victory that they did not dream of the possibility of defeat now.

Captain Dugard brought his experience as an engineer to bear upon the situation.

He had rifle pits dug and entrenchments thrown up.

It was with the calm confidence of hope that the savage army awaited the attack.

Dugard did not fear the result in a hand-to-hand combat, because Mirambo had an advantage in numbers of over twenty to one.

It was the cannon that he dreaded.

Mirambo's men had never seen a cannon fired, and did not know what a shell was.

At last the golden sun sank to its fleecy bed in the west.

A luminous haze overspread the sky.

Precisely at eight o'clock a puff of smoke was seen half a mile off.

This was followed by a loud report, and a heavy shell fell in the midst of the encampment.

The effect upon the natives was indescribable.

A dozen or more were killed and wounded by the explosion.

All stared blankly at one another.

What manner of warfare was this?

Did the Wasungu send thunderbolts from the skies?

The enemy was invisible, and yet they could kill with their wonderful engines of destruction.

Having got the range, Sampson Jack poured in shell after shell.

The Yamwezi could not stand this mode of warfare, and they demanded to be led against the enemy.

Dugard, frantic with rage, saw that the men would be routed without firing a shot.

Calling Mirambo on one side, he said:

"Withdraw one-half of the army into the intrenchments, and let the other half charge the guns."

"Who will lead them?" asked the king.

"I will," answered Dugard, calmly.

The necessary orders were then given.

A thousand men, making a detour to avoid the fire of the guns, ran in a disorderly mob along the plain.

They did not understand marching.

It was in vain that Dugard tried to discipline them.

Keeping up with them, he hoped for the best, knowing

they were brave at a charge, and meaning to try to capture the guns.

It was time that something was done.

Sampson Jack had elevated a mortar, which was throwing shells into the town.

Already the walled city of Yamwezi was on fire in different places.

The terror-stricken inhabitants were rushing frantically about with water, trying to extinguish the flames.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BATTLE.

WHEN Sampson Jack and Vipond saw the natives approaching, they loaded four guns with grapeshot.

Depressing the muzzles so as to sweep the field, they awaited the onset.

Behind the guns were two ranks of infantry, the first kneeling, the second standing.

These were armed with breech-loaders of the most approved fashion.

The half-naked warriors of Mirambo were stoutly-built, agile fellows, and got quickly over the ground.

Their arms were chiefly old-fashioned muzzle-loading ship's muskets.

These Mirambo had purchased from trading caravans in exchange for slaves and ivory.

The natives were in high glee at finding their approach was not stopped.

When they were within twenty yards of the guns, Sampson Jack said to the artillerymen:

"Now, my lads, give 'em pepper."

"Aye, aye, sir" was the ready response.

The next moment the match was applied, and the polished tubes belched forth their iron hail.

A terrible carnage ensued.

The savages halted in terror and wavered.

"Forward!" cried Dugard, waving his sword.

He bore a charmed life, for he came out of the deadly fire unscathed.

With the rapidity of practice the gunners loaded again, and ere the natives had recovered from their surprise, were ready to deliver a second murderous discharge.

"At them! Mungu is with you!" shouted Dugard in the Yamwezi dialect.

The example of the white man inspired them. A second time they rushed to the charge with fierce yells.

Quickly and terribly the guns did their work.

Another report was heard, and the grapeshot carried death to hundreds of the brave warriors of Mirambo.

Those who survived did not hesitate again.

They dashed forward, going up to the muzzles of the guns, discharging their pieces in the faces of the infantry.

The latter mowed them down with a calm and steady fire.

It was not a defeat; it was a butchery.

Dugard performed wonders.

His sword was ever at work, and his effort seemed to be to find Vipond.

But his reckless bravery led him too far.

Hemmed in on all sides, he was called upon to surrender, and, faint with exertion, he delivered his sword to Sampson Jack.

The battle in this part of the field was over.

Nearly seven hundred dusky warriors lay upon the bloodstained plain.

The others scampered across the waste in wild confusion, to carry the news of the awful disaster to their comrades.

Looking sternly at Dugard, Sampson Jack asked:

"How is it, sir, that I find a European fighting against his own race?"

"Ask your leader, Crawley Vipond," answered Dugard.

"For what purpose?"

"We have a feud, which can only end with the life of one of us, as he has done me the most deadly wrong one man can do another."

"That is a poor reason for me. I consider your life forfeited, as you have fought against us," answered Sampson Jack.

"You will act as you please," answered Dugard, with a calm majesty, "though by the laws of civilized warfare I am a prisoner."

"This is not civilized warfare."

"No matter. Fate has thrown me into your hands. Shoot me, if you like, at once."

He bared his breast as he spoke, as if he did not fear the coming of the messenger of death.

"No, no," cried the voice of Vipond, "shooting is too good for him. Hang him! Hang him!"

The scene in the semi-darkness was very striking.

Vipond had, with his characteristic cowardice, been hiding in his tent while the battle was going on.

Seeing that it had terminated favorably for his side, he came out in time to find that his dreaded enemy was in his power.

His face lighted up with exultation.

He heard not the cries of the wounded and the groans of the dying.

He saw not the whites carrying their dead to the rear, and attending to their wounded.

What mattered it to him that fifteen of their small force had fallen in the wild charge of the Yamwezi?

Dugard regarded him with a smile of ineffable scorn.

"Hang him if you will," said Sampson Jack, in his bluff way, "but give him till sunrise. Bind him, some of you, and see that he is well guarded. I have work to do yet."

He went away to the guns, and speedily the bombardment commenced again.

The utmost confusion prevailed in Mirambo's camp.

Furious with rage, the tyrant ordered Sagazi, his favorite medicine man, to be executed immediately.

The wretched quack was tied to a stake, in spite of his protestations and piteous cries.

Every one thought that he deserved to die, as his medicine or charm had worked badly for the army.

A dozen guns were leveled at him.

There was a report; his head fell on his shoulder. He was shot through the heart.

Shell after shell continued to fall in the camp.

Dugard was either killed or a prisoner, they did not know which.

The darkness increased the confusion.

Natives continued to run out of the burning city, ringing their hands, and calling upon Heaven to help them.

Women and children uttered piercing shrieks.

The lurid light of the flames from the city lit up the ghastly scene with a horrid glare.

Mirambo gave orders for an immediate retreat to the mountains.

While the soldiers were preparing for the march, Mirambo called an officer to him.

"Go to my palace," he said, "and bring the two white captives. The girl I will take with me. The other shall be an instant sacrifice to appease the anger of the mighty Mungu, who is displeased with us."

"You have killed that rascal Sagazi, my lord," replied the officer.

"True. He deserved to die. He was an imposter. Perhaps his death will do good. Quick. Be off. I await the coming of the prisoners."

The officer hastened away.

Fortunately for Dick, he had not waited to experience the tender mercies of Mirambo.

When the shot and shell began to fall into the devoted city, the palace guards quitted their posts, and hurried to the front.

This was enough for Dick.

He sought Alice, who, from excess of terror, had fainted.

Seizing her in his strong arms, as he would have done a child, he bore her through the burning streets.

The inhabitants were much alarmed to try to stop him.

Proceeding with his inanimate burden, he made for the gate which was situated farthest from the camp.

There were no guards.

Passing through, he left behind him the dull roar of the cannon, the explosion of the shells, and the screams of the frantic women and helpless children.

Having gained a safe position, he rested awhile, in order that Alice might recover herself.

This she did at last.

"Where am I?" she asked, looking around her wildly.

"With me," answered Dick, "outside the city. The attack has been commenced, and we are safe."

"Oh, take me to my father," said Alice.

"Are you strong enough to walk?"

"I think so. Let me cling to you," she answered.

"Hold on. That's it," said Dick.

"Your Henriette would not be jealous now if she saw me, would she?"

"I hope she would have more sense," replied Dick.

"I am such a poor, weak, foolish thing, and you are so strong," she continued. "Oh, how proud I should be if I were your Henriette."

Dick, with his usual gallantry, thought there would be no harm in giving the pretty Alice a kiss.

The touch of his lips thrilled through her like electricity.

"You must not do that," she said, gently; "your Henriette would not like that."

"But I love you like a—sister," said Dick.

"Well, you shall be my brother, though that's rather a cold relationship," said Alice. "Come, let us go; I am strong again now."

Dick thought Alice was beginning to love him. Nor was he wrong.

She had conceived a strong liking for him, which was rapidly ripening into something warmer.

We must leave them to make their way to the camp, while we return to Harold Dugard and Crawley Vipond.

The latter did not dare order Dugard for immediate execution.

Sampson Jack wouldn't have allowed it.

But in a couple of hours' time when the latter thought he had shelled the enemy's position sufficiently, he ordered two guns to be drawn along by donkeys, and as many men as he could spare for an attacking force were told off.

He was going to the walled city of Yamwezi to rescue his daughter.

His mind was in a whirl.

Perhaps the tyrant Mirambo had ordered her to be killed.

Or she might have lost her life by the explosion of some unlucky shell.

He could only hope that she was living.

When he approached the city he found none to oppose his victorious progress.

Mirambo had retreated to the mountains with those of his men who were left.

Menzies accompanied him in the character of his lieutenant, and did effectual service in organizing the retreat.

The city was a heap of smoking ruins.

Outside the walls was a weeping crowd of old men, helpless women and houseless children.

It was a sad sight.

In the morning the dawn would reveal, in all its hideousness, the ghastly horrors of war.

No sooner had Sampson Jack departed than Vipond sent for Messiter and Ted.

They had both been fighting bravely, and were black with smoke and dust.

The stain of blood was on their hands and dress, as if they had taken life in the battle.

"Messiter," said Vipond, "bring the prisoner here."

In a few minutes Dugard was standing before his enemy.

He was calm, brave, defiant.

Vipond was in a state of nervous excitement. Although he had nothing to fear, he trembled in every limb.

His evil conscience smote him, and the man whom he had so deeply wronged was hateful in his eyes.

The moon had risen, and the two forms stood out in bold relief.

At this moment a wild-looking, gaunt figure, covered with blood and dirt, appeared.

It was the professor.

He had been drinking palm spirit all day to get himself ready for the battle.

He had been placed in the front rank of the infantry with a rifle.

When the charge was made, he shut his eyes and fired. Half a dozen natives fell dead, in a bloody heap, upon him.

Overcome by fear and palm spirit, the professor slept calmly for some hours.

At length he woke up, and made his way from under the stiffening corpses.

"Poof!" he exclaimed, "I have done my duty this day; I have slain the Philistines and the Amalekites, as did Joshua and other chiefs of old. Poof!"

"I thought you were dead, sir," said Messiter.

"Not much. Do I look like it? Poof! I am a Saxon."

His eyes fell upon the majestic form of Dugard.

"What!" he cried, "can it be? Whom have we here? Is it, indeed, our old friend, the captain?"

"We meet under unfortunate circumstances, Mr. Crab," answered Dugard.

"Poof!" said the professor, "we have sailed together; come to my tent. I have cold pig and palm spirit wherewith to regale you. We are both Saxons. Poof!"

"Stay, Mr. Crab," said Vipond, "this cannot be."

"Cannot! Poof! Who says that word to me?"

"I do! Mr. Dugard is a prisoner."

"Never mind. If he is, treat him well. Poof! Let us be jolly. Have I not slain the Amalekites? Poof!" rejoined the professor.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEATH BY THE CORD.

COMPREHENDING how affairs stood, the professor remained silent.

The pause was of brief duration.

Crawley Vipond exclaimed in a voice which he made as strong and resolute as he could:

"Mr. Dugard is a prisoner of war."

"Is that any reason why he should be killed?" asked the professor.

"Mr. Crab," answered Vipond, "he was captured in arms against us."

"What then?"

"Is it fair for a white man to league himself with half-savage people against his own countrymen?"

"Perhaps he had an object in it."

"He had," replied Vipond, "and that object was my death. We have a private quarrel. He would kill me whenever he had the chance."

"Why?" asked Dugard in a deep, commanding voice.

"We need not go into that," answered Vipond.

"But we will," continued Dugard. "I will explain to these gentlemen, if they do not know already, why your death is on object to me—why, in fact, it has become the one object of my life."

"There is no necessity for it," screamed Vipond.

Disregarding the rage of his enemy, Dugard went on:

"This man," he said, "knew I was fighting for the South, my country, my home, my property. He basely told my wife I was dead, and seduced her affection from me."

"It's a lie!" cried Vipond, stamping his foot on the ground.

"Silence!" exclaimed Dugard, raising his voice. "Not satisfied with that, I have learnt that he caused her death by a cowardly blow."

Vipond bit his lips.

"Mr. Crab, Messiter, you, Ted, boy as you are, can judge whether or not I have cause to hate and despise this scoundrel, who has blighted my life."

"It certainly seems to me," replied the professor, "that you have much to complain of."

"What matters it," exclaimed Vipond, "you are in my power."

"Perhaps not so much as you think," returned Dugard with a quiet smile.

"We shall see. I must rid myself of a nightmare. Man, you are killing me by inches."

"Not I. It is your conscience which weighs you down."

"It seems to me," remarked the professor, "that Saxons should not kill Saxons. Poof!"

"Allow me to do as I like in this instance," answered Vipond. "I may never have such a chance again. Messiter and Ted."

"Well, sir," replied Messiter.

"Put a rope round this man's neck, and hang him up to the nearest tree."

Messiter shrugged his shoulders.

"What!" screamed Vipond, "do you disobey orders?"

"Yes," answered Messiter.

"I can have you shot."

"Can you? It will take you all your time, I can tell you."

"What is this fellow Dugard to you?"

"We have sailed together, and although I have no particular fancy for him, I think he is in the right in his quarrel with you."

"Ted," said Vipond, "will you obey orders?"

"No, sir," answered Ted; "I am only an odd boy, but I have my feelings, and ain't going in for Calcraft's berth."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not an executioner, and don't want to turn hangman," answered Ted.

He put his hands in his pockets, and walked away.

"We shall see," said Vipond.

Raising his voice, he cried:

"Sangaru! Sangaru!"

The native guide ran up.

Whispering in his ear, Vipond said:

"You shall have fifty dots of fine cloth if you will take the prisoner away and hang him at once."

"That suit me, Bana!" answered Sangaru, with a smile.

"Call your men about you. Keep back Mr. Crab and Messiter. Never mind what they say."

"Right, Bana," said Sangaru, nodding his head significantly.

He whistled in a peculiar manner, and a dozen Pagazi, well armed, came up.

Touching Dugard on the shoulder, he said, "March."

The latter having his arms bound behind, he could not help himself.

Messiter turned to Captain Vipond.

"What do you mean to do?" he asked.

"He must die!" answered Vipond.

"Die? How?"

"His will be death by the cord."

"You will not hang him. Let him die a soldier's death if he must die," urged Messiter.

"No," answered Vipond. "He is in my power now. It is useless to speak in his favor."

"At least wait till Sampson Jack returns."

There was a noise at the north side of the camp.

"Here he is," said Vipond. "It is Sampson Jack who has come back, and you will find that he will not interfere to save the prisoner."

"I am not so sure of that."

"Stay, boy," cried Vipond, laying his hand on Messiter's shoulder.

"Leave go!" cried Messiter.

"Why should you interest yourself in Dugard? Was he too kind to you on board his submarine ship?"

"I like him better than I do you," answered Messiter, adding loudly, "Here! I say, Captain Jack. Come here."

Sampson Jack, who had returned from the burning city of Yamwezi, approached.

He had been unable to find any trace of Dick or his daughter.

"Look here," continued Messiter; "will you let Captain Vipond hang a white man?"

"What white man?" asked Sampson Jack.

"The one who was fighting with Mirambo."

"Certainly I will, and serve him tarnation well right, too."

"More shame for you," said Messiter, fearing that nothing could save Dugard.

Already the Pagazi had dragged him away.

Death by the cord stared him in the face.

But like a brave man, he did not flinch from it.

Perhaps, if his heart could have been examined, there would have been found a sigh of regret that he could not avenge the death of his beloved Adele.

Most likely, here as he was, he felt a pang, to reflect that a scoundrel like Vipond should escape the consequences of all his villainy.

But the brave soldier who had fought upon a dozen fields with Jackson and with Lee had seen death to often to feel any fear for it.

Sangaru was engaged in making a noose in a rope.

The prisoner stood under a tree.

Not a spasm of fear contracted his features.

He was as calm as he had been under the fire of the Federals at Gettysburg, or when blocked in the ice near the Pole.

"Has any one seen Lighthouse?" asked Messiter, turning his thoughts to Dick.

Unexpectedly a voice answered in the darkness without the camp.

"There's some one coming, Master Harry, leading a lady, as well as I can make out."

It was Ted who spoke.

"By Jove!" cried Messiter, "that must be Dick."

"I trust it is," remarked the professor, who was close by, drinking palm spirit out of a gourd. "I am a Saxon—poof!—and I have faith in Lighthouse. He may stop this butchery. Poof!"

Captain Vipond ran toward Sangaru.

At the same moment Messiter rushed in the direction of Ted's voice.

The darkness of the night was only relieved by the occasional glimpses which ragged clouds gave of the moon and the light shed by a few straggling stars.

It was Messiter's wish to save Captain Dugard if possible.

He had not the power, but he knew Dick could do it if he liked.

In fact, Messiter's confidence and belief in Dick were unlimited.

When Vipond got up to Sangaru he found the rope slung over a branch.

"Make haste; how slow you are," he exclaimed, nervously.

"Me turn him off quick, Bana," answered Sangaru.

The fellow put the rope round Dugard's neck.

Not a word did the brave man utter.

"Hoist away," cried Vipond, eagerly.

At this moment forces were seen approaching, and Lighthouse appeared, out of breath, led by Messiter.

Sampson Jack followed, his daughter leaning on his arm.

"Stop," cried Dick. "What would you do?"

"Stand back, boy," exclaimed Vipond, furiously.

"By George!" continued Dick, "I'll shoot the first man who moves."

With his own hands he removed the rope from Dugard's neck.

"Life for life, sir," he said.

"Thank you, my lad," said Dugard.

He evinced no more emotion than if he had received a cup of water from him.

"Captain Jack," cried Vipond, "will you see me thwarted in this way?"

"I have nothing to say," answered Sampson Jack.

"My Lighthouse has saved my daughter, and he may do what he likes."

"Fall back, you cattle. Back, you brutes," exclaimed Dick, pushing his torch in the faces of the Pagazi.

They slunk away.

"Crawley Vipond," said Dugard, "we part. My turn now, and then beware!"

Vipond, foaming at the mouth, and speechless with rage and fear, walked back to his tent.

He saw that his vengeance was lost.

The professor had watched this scene with great interest.

"Poof!" he exclaimed, "I like this. Captain Dugard, I congratulate you. Poof! are we not all Saxons?"

Dugard approached Sampson Jack.

"I am glad," he said, "your child is safe. I have had more to do in preserving her life than you may be aware of."

"She is all right," answered Sampson Jack; "Mirambo can't harm her now."

"Is Mirambo beaten?"

"Badly. He has retired to the mountains with less than half his army."

"And Yamwezi?"

"Is in ruins, thanks to my guns."

"Farewell," said Dugard; "I shall not forget my friends, but let my enemies tremble."

"Stop with us, sir, and make a night of it," said Dick.

"Yes," said the professor, "let me beg of you to stop. Poof! We don't win a battle every day."

"I cannot stay," answered Dugard.

He seized Dick's hand and shook it warmly. Then he stalked away in the darkness, being soon lost to sight.

"A remarkable man," said the professor. "Poof! But we are all remarkable. Are we not Saxons? Poof!"

Being tired with the day's work, all were glad to turn in. A watch was set, and soon the boys slept soundly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SLAVE GANG.

So complete was the victory the white men gained over Mirambo that there was no fear of his renewing the contest.

Sampson Jack in the morning saw to the burying of the dead.

Then he collected his men together, and prepared to return with his daughter to the coast.

Alice was full of gratitude to Dick for his kindness to her, and seemed very sorry to part from him.

Her father gave him an invitation to visit him if he ever came to Bagamoyo or Zanzibar again.

Captain Vipond was surly and ill-tempered.

He would not speak to Dick, because he had thwarted him the night before.

The country being open now, there was nothing to prevent them from pressing on.

As Dugard was free, and Sampson Jack was going, it would not be prudent, he thought, to remain where they were.

So he sent Sangaru to inform Dick that the march would be resumed at noon.

An hour before the time Sampson Jack and his party were ready.

Alice and Dick were taking an affectionate adieu.

Sangaru came up to him, and said:

"Bana, a slave gang."

"Where?" asked Dick.

"Outside the camp. They are from the coast, and have brought white slaves for Mirambo, to exchange for ivory."

"White slaves?" said Dick. "How the deuce did they get them?"

"The chief says there was a British ship wrecked on the coast, and they made many prisoners and took much spoil, though some men have died."

"The villains."

"Are there any women in the gang?" asked Alice.

"One white girl," answered Sangaru.

"Poor thing; do not let her be sold to Mirambo, Mr. Lighthouse."

"I'll be jolly well flabbergasted if she shall," said Dick, adding, "Sangaru."

"Bana," answered the guide.

"Let a score of armed Pagazi surround the slave caravan, and you shall answer with your life for the rascals moving."

Sangaru bowed and departed.

Dick went to Sampson Jack, and told him what the guide had reported.

"It's a crying shame," said Captain Jack. "The villains daren't sell white men on the coast, so they have brought them inland."

"Will you stand by me if it comes to a riot?"

"Will I not?" was the ready reply.

"We will liberate them, then," said Dick, generously and confidently.

He went to the outskirts of the encampment, where the slave caravan had halted.

The leaders wished to obtain information about Mirambo, with whom they were going to trade.

On the ground, lying and sitting, were the white slaves.

Their number was reduced by death to half a dozen, one of whom was a woman.

The men were chained together by heavy iron links, which went round the neck of each of them.

But the woman was by herself and had a donkey to ride upon.

Her life was deemed to be too valuable to be trifled with in such a climate.

The first glance Dick gave at her made him start.

"My stars!" he exclaimed. "It can't be—"

Going close up to the white girl, who was sitting disconsolately upon the donkey, and looking as if all hope had left her breast, he glanced again.

The glance became a stare, and he could no longer doubt.

"Polly," he ejaculated.

She turned her eyes towards him with an expression of deep joy.

But the once happy face was so sad, so worn and altered, that he scarcely knew it again.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "Heaven must have sent you to my help!"

"How is it I find you here?"

"We were wrecked in a storm in the Mozambique

Channel, and those of us who were saved fell into the hands of the natives, who have taken us such a weary journey inland to be sold as slaves."

"Is Hopkins alive?"

"Alas! no," replied Polly. "He died at sea. When the storm rose the waves washed him overboard."

"Poor fellow," said Dick, feelingly.

"I am glad of it now," said Polly. "He has been spared so much suffering."

"And Snarley?"

"Better had he shared my father's fate, sad as it was."

"Why?"

"He has marched through swamps and forests, chained to the others, but this morning he was seized with the fever."

"Is he dead?"

"I cannot say," replied Polly. "They would not let me nurse him; but when they found he had what they call the mukunguru—"

"That's the intermittent fever," put in Dick.

"Yes; well, they unchained him, and left him on the road to die."

"Horrible!"

"It nearly broke my heart to leave him. But what could I do? They threatened to kill me if I moved, and tied my legs under the donkey's stomach," said Polly.

"Can I do anything?"

"Oh, do please try!"

"I will, like a shot."

"Can I come with you? I know the way we came," said Polly.

"Of course you can."

"Are you not afraid of those cruel, savage-looking men?"

"Not a ha'porth. It isn't a pound to a shilling I don't shoot the lot," replied Dick.

"Are you so strong, then?"

"We've been strong enough to lick Mirambo into fits and burn his town."

"Yamwezi," said Polly.

"Yes."

"That's where I was to be taken to. And have you really beaten Mirambo? I thought he was the strongest king that ever lived, and the richest, from the way those slaves talked."

"All bosh," replied Dick: "we doubled him up like grass."

"If you can do anything for my poor husband I shall be so grateful, Dick," continued Polly.

He squeezed her hand, which, like her face, was tanned by the sun, and saying, "Wait here for me an instant," went to Messiter.

"What's up?" asked the latter.

He saw by the expression of his face that something unusual had happened.

"Polly's in the slave gang," answered Dick.

"Nonsense."

"She is, though, and Snarley has been left to die of fever in the bush."

"How did it happen?"

"They were all wrecked on the coast. Hopkins was drowned, and the survivors were made prisoners and brought inland to be sold as slaves to Mirambo."

"What next?" said Messiter, astonished.

"Get some quinine, and come with me to help Snarley."

"All right; I shant be a minute."

Dick next sought Sampson Jack.

"What is it now, my lad?" asked the latter.

"I want you to do me a favor, sir," replied Dick.

"You have only to name it."

"The slaves in that gang over there are British, and some of them are friends of mine; just have their chains knocked off, and take possession of them, while you send the slave dealers about their business."

"Of course I will," answered Sampson Jack.

Dick was joined by Messiter, who carried with him some medicine, such as was generally used in cases of fever.

They caused Polly to dismount, which she did amidst the murmurs of the slavers.

But Dick showed them a revolver.

"Tell them to slope at once," said he to Sangaru, "or I'll shoot every mother's son of them."

The display of force was so great that the traders dared not interfere.

They were, however, very savage at seeing Dick take away their chief prize.

Grumbling was of no use, and they were forced to submit.

Polly acted as guide.

The little party proceeded in melancholy silence.

Tears fell from pretty Polly's eyes, and Dick and Messiter were much affected.

It seemed but yesterday that they were all together at Zanzibar.

And it was not so very long ago that they were at Harrow House Academy with Mr. Snarley as their tutor.

Now he was dying, if not dead, in the wilds of Africa. Perhaps the wild beasts were even then fighting over his remains.

Dick could not help thinking of the words of Scripture—

"In the midst of life we are in death."

This simple truth came home to him in the vast solitude in which for the first time his lot was cast.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEATH OF SNARLEY.

The distance they had to go was not great.

A path had been made by the slave caravan through the long grass.

For two miles, or a little more, Polly led them along, and at last she halted under a spreading tree.

At its foot lay the body of a man.

They recognized it instantly as that of Mr. Snarley, though it was strangely worn and altered.

In a few weeks he seemed to have aged twenty years.

such was the effect of the hardship, captivity, and exposure upon him.

But he had led a free life.

It is only the young and temperate, who neither eat nor drink too much, who can successfully withstand the dangers of the African climate.

Polly threw herself on her knees beside him, and overwhelmed him with passionate exclamations and caresses.

He did not recognize her.

Though not dead, he was in an alarming state of delirium.

His feeble frame was almost exhausted, but the mind, for the present triumphed over the body.

"Ha! ha!" he cried. "Here we are again! what jolly dogs we are!"

"He fancies himself on the boards," whispered Polly.

"I'm the boy for fun," he continued. "How many sausages go to a pound, when you never pay for them? Ha! ha! There was an old woman her living she got by selling hot codlings, hot, hot, hot."

He paused, and his eyes rolled fearfully, while his black and parched lips twitched nervously.

"This little old woman she thought it no sin," he went on, "to buy herself a penn'orth of — I didn't say gin, you swell in the gallery! What do you mean, by it, sir? Come down here, and I'll give you a taste of the red hot poker. Ha! ha!"

Suddenly his mood changed.

A contraction came over his gaunt features and he said:

"Chain me, will they? Sell me, will they? Make me a slave? They wouldn't do it if Lightheart was here."

"He's talking of you," said Polly.

The tears fell fast from Dick's eyes.

Beckoning to Messiter, he took some medicine in the half of a cocoanut shell and poured it down Snarley's throat.

There was a faint sob and a spasmodic movement of the limbs, and that was all.

Polly had sunk on her knees, and was crying bitterly.

"Too late!" said Messiter, under his breath.

"By Heaven! he shall not die!" cried Dick.

The recording angel caught the words and carried them up to Heaven's chancery.

But to use Sterne's beautiful words:

"As he wrote them down a tear fell from his eye and blotted them out for ever."

"Mr. Snarley," cried Dick, chaffing his hands, "do you not know me, sir?"

The eyes of the dying man rolled fearfully.

"You," said Snarley. "Yes, I know you. You are the Sultan; you stole my Polly!"

"No, no; I am here," said Polly.

"You lie!" ejaculated poor Snarley. "Fiends, avant; you mock me. Polly is dead; we are all dead! Where am I? Is this hell? Oh! how my head throbs and my brain burns!"

"I am Lightheart. Surely, you know your old friend and pupil, sir?"

Snarley stared vacantly at him.

He shook his head mournfully.

"Why will these unreal shadowns gibe at me?" he exclaimed.

"His mind is wandering," observed Messiter.

"It's the effect of the fever," replied Dick.

Suddenly Snarley's head fell back upon Polly's lap, and she tried to make him comfortable.

"It will soon be over," said Messiter.

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Dick. "It is horrible for him to die like this out here. Those slaves ought to be shot for leaving him."

The fast failing breath came slower and yet more slowly from the cracked lips.

A dull, heavy stare, the precursor of death, stole into the glazed eyes.

The hands clenched and unclenched themselves.

A convulsive action of the limbs took place, and an unearthly rattle sounded in the throat.

"God have mercy on him," said Dick.

He placed his hand upon his heart.

It had ceased to beat.

Mr. Snarley was dead.

Tearing up some grass, Dick laid it very gently over the still wan face.

Then he placed some flowers over all.

"Stay here, Harry," he said, "and keep the wild beasts off; I will bring some Pagazi to dig him a grave. He turned away and wiped his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket.

"Come, Polly, my poor, stricken dear," he said.

"Oh, let me stay. May I not die with him?" she replied, appealingly.

"This is no place for you; come with me, my child," continued Dick.

He spoke in the manner of one much older than himself.

But a life of adventure had made a man of him before the time.

It had taught him self-reliance, and how to act in moments of danger and distress.

Polly suffered herself to be raised up, and clinging to his arm she walked away from the mournful spot, weeping as if her heart would break.

Her husband had fallen a victim to the deadly African climate.

Her father had perished amidst the cruel waves, and she was now alone in the world.

Dick was the only person she could call a friend.

No wonder she was bowed down and afflicted. Heaven had sorely tried and afflicted her in these latter days.

Thousands of miles away from home, in a foreign and savage land.

War fever, death raging around her.

What a situation for a young and delicate wife!

When they reached the camp, Dick led her up to Alice and put her hand in hers.

"Alice," he said "you told me I had some slight claim on your gratitude."

"A very great claim, and one I can never repay," she replied.

"You can repay me in full."

"How?"

"Take Polly to your arms; make her your sister," he replied. "She has lost all her friends, and just closed the eyes of her husband."

"Come, dearest," said Alice, with that tenderness which the affliction of one of her own sex ought always to inspire in the breast of another.

She drew the weeping girl to her bosom, and Polly's head sank down, as if she wished to hide it for ever.

"You will take her to the cost with you," continued Dick, "will you not?"

"Oh, yes."

"Cherish and guard her till you can send her back to England."

"She shall be my sister," replied Alice, affectionately.

"You are a good girl," said Dick, "and God will reward you."

Having disposed of Polly, his first act was to dispatch the rascally slaves about their business.

The English sailors had been released, and were being regaled by Ted on such fare as the camp afforded.

At first the traders were disposed to be insolent. But a display of force awed them, and muttering curses, they went away.

Dick next ordered a party of Pagazi to go, with picks and shovels, to the spot where he had left Messiter with the body.

Their task was to dig a grave.

In his baggage Dick had a prayer-book, and he put it in his pocket.

Calling Ted to his side, he told him what had happened, and together they sadly wended their way to the grave.

The Pagazi had worked with a will.

All was now ready for the interment, which in such a hot climate must always follow quickly upon death.

Tender and loving hands laid Mr. Snarley's body in its last home.

Very feelingly did Dick read the beautiful and affecting burial service of the church.

Seldom, if ever, had it been given under more simply touching circumstances.

"When he came to the words, 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' he cast a few clods on the corpse.

Both Ted and Messiter were affected to tears. Even Dick's voice trembled with uncontrollable emotion.

In that wild country, which of them could tell that he would not share the same fate?

The death of a friend comes home terribly to the traveler in a savage and far-distant country.

Standing in an attitude of respectful attention, the Pagazi were grouped at the foot of the grave.

They watched with interest the strange ceremony of the Wasungu.

Closing the book of prayer, Dick made them a signal to fill up the grave.

This was quickly done.

Then they made a rude cross of stones to mark the resting place of the unfortunate Snarley.

"His troubles are over," remarked Messiter.

Dick said nothing, and the party returned to camp.

CHAPTER XX.

A GHASTLY SIGHT.

WHEN they reached the encampment they heard the Pagazi shouting and singing in celebration of their victory.

Vipond, to encourage them, had given each two days' pay in cloth, and an extra allowance of pemi.

"Hi! hi! hi! Lu! lu! lu!"

The many shouts were borne upon the breeze, affording a strange contrast to the melancholy scene the boys had just passed through.

Firearms were discharged, songs sung, and dances kept up till the sweat poured in streams from their nearly naked bodies.

The professor, half drunk, had joined in the merriment.

"Poof! he said, 'go it, you nigger fellows. Poof! I fought like a Saxon, and have a right to enjoy myself.'

The natives sang a rude, wild song, with very little sense in it:

"Yambo Bana, here we are;

Yambo Bana, this is war;

Binderi Kisungu, white man's flag,

Mirambo ran like a bald-faced stag,

Hi! hi! hi! Ho! ho! ho! Lu! lu! lu!"

And so it went on in the same silly manner and monotonous cadence until all were wearied, and ceased with common consent.

In the afternoon Sampson Jack and his party took their leave.

He willingly promised to look after Polly and treat her as a daughter.

Polly begged to be allowed to remain with Dick. This he would not permit.

"We have too many dangers to encounter, my dear," he said; "it is best for you to go with Captain Jack."

Giving her a kiss, he pushed her gently towards Alice, and the caravan started.

Shots were fired as usual, and each party seemed in the highest spirits.

Captain Vipond did not march till the following morning.

He made up his grievance with Dick, knowing that the latter was more popular with and more the master of the men than he was.

Dick received the honor of an invitation to dine with him in his tent.

Sangaru had been sent out to shoot some fresh meat, and an excellent meal was prepared.

Vipond had a few cases of French wines and spirits with him, and champagne was produced.

"You must not feel annoyed with me, Lightheart," said the captain.

"Why should I, sir?" replied Dick. "I had my way."

"Yes, I know you saved my enemy Dugard from my vengeance."

"Because he had previously saved my life."

"I know nothing about that."

"Nor am I supposed to know anything about your rows, sir," said Dick. "When I agreed to travel with you, I did not bind myself body and soul."

"Certainly not," exclaimed Vipond with a sigh. "It is a pity though that Dugard got away. I am as uneasy as ever now. Goodness only knows where my adventures will end."

"Let us push on to the interior of Africa at once," said Dick.

"As you please. I place everything in your hands."

"Mirambo is thoroughly beaten."

"Do you think so?" asked Vipond.

"Completely." He will not prevent us passing through his dominions."

"You will not betray me into Dugard's hands?" said Vipond.

An indignant flash spread itself over Dick's face.

"I don't know what I have ever said or done, Captain Vipond, that you should have such a bad opinion of me," he answered.

"Pardon me, I am weak and nervous."

"But that is no reason why you should suspect me."

"I cannot help it. You helped Dugard to escape; I am naturally suspicious. Forgive me if I have offended you."

"My dear sir," said Dick, "I would save your life under similar circumstances if I had the power. Be satisfied that I am not a traitor."

"I will," replied Vipond, drawing a long breath of relief.

"Make your miserable life happy, and pass the bottle," said Dick, with a smile.

"Remember, I trust everything to you," replied Vipond.

"You can't do better," answered Dick; "we shall push on past Unyanyemba to-morrow, and make for the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Who knows where I shall take you? To the middle of the earth, perhaps."

"I shall not mind, provided—"

"What? Do you mean if we have a return ticket?"

asked Dick, with a smile.

"No. Provided Dugard cannot follow us."

It was in vain that Dick tried to make Crawley Vipond's mind dwell upon some other topic.

He was persuaded that Dugard would be the death of him some day.

It was impossible for him to shake off this all-engrossing belief.

Like a deer hunted by the hounds, his only wish and thought was escape from the enemy.

Early in the morning the camp was struck.

The professor pulled himself together, and recollected his character of a scientific man.

Still he said, "He was a Saxon. Poof!" as he watched the natives striking the tents.

Just as the long train was in the act of starting, Sangaru came up to Dick.

"Yambo, Kiboko, Bana!" he exclaimed, "there is a camp follower, half English, half Arab, a mere boy, who wants to take service with us."

"Where is he from?" asked Dick.

"He says he has escaped from a caravan, the traders of which treated him badly. Shall he join?"

"Yes. I want a boy. Send him along," answered Dick.

It was not until the mid-day halt that Dick had an opportunity of noticing the lad.

He was dressed in the Arab costume, and wore more linen than a native, his body being scrupulously covered all over.

His face was dark, and he spoke broken English.

Dick had called for some water, and the Arab boy brought him some in a gourd.

"What's your name?" asked Dick.

"Hassan," replied the boy, in a nervous voice!

Dick thought he knew the inflection of that voice, but dismissed the idea from his mind as improbable.

There was something, too, about those almost feminine features which attracted his attention.

"Be faithful to me, Hassan," he said, "and you won't find me a bad master."

"Me watch over you, sir, while you sleep," replied the boy.

"I don't want you to do that, but keep your eyes open, that's all."

"Me be your slave," said the boy, kneeling down at his feet.

"Dick quickly raised him, and told him to go about his business."

"I hate slaves," he exclaimed; "do your duty, and I shall be satisfied."

The boy bent a tender, almost loving glance upon him, and joined the Pagazi who were preparing the mid-day meal.

Dick could not help thinking there was some mystery about the boy.

But he had so much to see to that the matter soon escaped from his memory.

The march recommenced.

At four o'clock by his chronometer they passed the smoking ruins of Yamwezi.

The old men, women, and children ran away from them as if they had been fiends.

A little further on the leader of the column came to a halt.

Sangaru ran back to Dick, gesticulating and making strange noises.

"Bana!" he cried, come here. Look what is on that tree."

Dick hurried forward, followed by Messiter and Ted. A horrible and ghastly sight met his gaze.

Hanging from a tree was the body of a white boy. One look at the blackened and convulsed face showed him that it was Menzies.

The unhappy youth had been hung up to a branch by his neck, and was quite dead.

They never learnt the reason of Menzies' death, but it was supposed that Mirambo's men, actuated by superstitious motives, had insisted upon his execution.

A white sacrifice to their god was always highly esteemed by them.

Perhaps they thought that they would propitiate their deity by this act of cruelty.

At all events, there was the body swinging stiff and cold in the wind.

"He'd have done better to stay with us," said Messiter.

"It serves him right for deserting his friends," observed Ted. "What could he expect from such heathens?"

Dick turned away, ill at heart, from the sickening spectacle.

Ted began climbing the tree.

"What's your game?" asked Messiter.

"I'm only an odd boy, sir, but I've got my feelings," answered Ted, and I can't see a Christian body hanging there for the birds to peck at. They've had an eye already."

It was too true.

A bird of prey had been at work, and the hollow cavern which had held the eye was gaping and gory.

Taking out his knife, Ted cut the rope.

"Below," he exclaimed. "Look out."

The professor, who had come up to see what was the matter, was too late to benefit by the warning.

At his feet fell the dead body.

"Poof!" cried the horror-stricken professor, stepping back hurriedly; "do corpses grow on the trees in this strange country?"

"No, sir," said Dick; "it is Menzies, who has been murdered by those he chose for his friends."

"Dear me! He should not have fought against us. Poof! we are all Saxons."

"That's what we say, sir. He deserved his fate for his treachery," answered Dick.

The melancholy task of digging a grave was again gone through.

With a reverence that showed how deeply the boys felt this new shock, Menzies was laid in the silent grave.

Soon the spotted snake would glide over his rude tomb; the wild beast would roar, and the beetle hum in the long grass.

No sister's or mother's hand would strew flowers upon the grave of the murdered boy, buried deep in the heart of an African forest.

No sympathetic tears would fall, and there his bones would moulder through the long years to come.

It was with a feeling of relief that Dick heard the natives preparing to renew the journey.

"Sofari, sofari, pakia," they shouted. "A journey, a journey to-day. Start."

Fresh dangers were before them, and who could tell what the morrow would bring forth.

They were pretty well seasoned to African travel now, and did not dread the fever as they had done.

Little time was lost. Captain Vipond kept continually saying:

"Push on, push on!"

He fancied that Dugard, more vindictive than ever, was at his heels.

For the wicked, it has been truly said, there is no peace.

CHAPTER XXI.

SANGARU'S TREACHERY.

NO TRADING caravans go further than Ujiji as a rule.

Sangaru and his Pagazi had not agreed to go beyond that place.

They were not altogether satisfied.

Several of their number had fallen in the fight with Mirambo.

From Bagamoyo, their starting place, to Unyanyembi, was nearly four hundred miles. It was customary to stop at Unyanyembi and make merry and rest for a few weeks.

But Vipond pushed on to Ujiji, on the banks of the Lake Tanganyika, without any delay.

The men grumbled.

When Dick heard them he threatened them with his revolver.

Still discontent existed amongst them.

They traveled as the bird flies, making an average of fifteen miles a day.

The distance in a straight line to Ujiji, the "place with the rum name," as Ted called it, was two hundred miles.

Making allowance for delays, crossing rivers, stopping to pay tribute, etc., Dick hoped to do it in three weeks.

They passed through the territories of the Usagozi and other fierce tribes.

At length, according to Captain Vipond and the professor's reckoning, they were within thirty miles of Ujiji.

It was evening, and all within the precincts of the camp had gone to rest except the sentinels.

The watch was entrusted to Sangaru and his Pagazi.

Stars sprinkled the firmament, but there was no moon.

Dick had been asleep about a couple of hours when he awoke, feeling a soft pressure on his arm.

Starting up, he saw Hassan, the Arab boy.

"Sangaru gone with all Pagazi and baggage, Bana!" said the boy.

He spoke in a soft, low voice, so suggestive of that of a woman.

"Gone?" repeated Dick.

"Yes, Bana, I woke up and found all gone."

"Curses on the rascals to leave us like this!" cried Dick, furiously.

"It's not too late to pursue."

"How do I know which way they have gone? Devil take the thieves."

Dick looked and saw three men in a boat. "Here's luck," he said, "if we can only get that ship we can go by water to Ujiji."

"Let's pot them," said Messiter. The professor looked through a telescope. "Only three of them," he remarked. "But there may be a lot behind," said Ted. "I don't like killing even niggers in cold blood. Poof! I am a Saxon," continued the professor.

"Nonsense!" cried Captain Vipond, who was standing by. "We want that boat, don't we?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "Very well, we must have it, Lightheart. Messiter, prepare to fire after me."

The unsuspecting natives came close in shore. Captain Vipond fired, and the bow oar came down. Messiter lowered his rifle. "Fire, fire!" exclaimed Vipond, angrily. "No, I shan't," answered Messiter; "they've done nothing to us."

"Fire, Lightheart, continued Vipond; as this boy is a fool."

"Not much," exclaimed Dick. "Harry's no fool. It is too much like murder to them when they've no quarrel with us."

Vipond uttered a curse and seized Ted's gun, which he discharged. The stroke oar fell mortally wounded. Alarmed at the sudden death of his companions, the steerer jumped overboard, and swam to land, and disappeared in a thicket.

"Ted," said Vipond. "Sir."

"Swim to the boat and paddle her in."

Ted very soon had his clothes off, and plunged into the lake.

The boat was not more than a couple of dozen yards distant. Swimming to the boat, he climbed in, but found it too big and unwieldy for him to manage by himself. "Mr. Vipond, sir," he exclaimed. "What is it?" answered the captain. "Send the Arab boy to help me. It wants two for this ship."

"Hassan," said Vipond, "take off your clothes and go and help Ted."

"I can't," replied the boy, shrinking back. "What are you afraid of?"

"Crocodiles."

"Humbug," said Vipond; "if there were any, they would have attacked Ted. Go along."

Hassan showed no signs of obeying. Captain Vipond broke a stick down from a tree, and held it over him. As usual, he was sullen, savage, and ferocious. "Strip!" he cried. "Oh, Bana," exclaimed the poor Arab boy, "protect me!"

"Don't be foolish," replied Dick. "Do as he tells you. There is nothing unreasonable in it."

"I can't," was the reply. "Why not?"

Captain Vipond did not give him time to reply, for he brought the swish down sharply over his shoulders. A sharp cry of pain broke from him. "Don't hurt the lad," said Dick. "I will be obeyed," said the captain. "Still you need not be brutal."

The soft blue eyes looked up so beseechingly into Dick's, that the latter snatched the swish out of Vipond's hand.

"Oh," said Vipond, "if you are going to be master, and thwart me at every turn, I can't help it."

"Let me talk to him," said Dick. Vipond shrugged his shoulders and stood still. "Perhaps," he said, "by this waste of time we shall have Mwezi's people down upon us. One nigger has escaped, as you know, thanks to your mistaken ideas of humanity."

"Can you swim?" asked Dick. "Yes," said the boy; "I learnt at Brighton."

Dick burst into a loud laugh. "That's either a thundering big lie or—"

He paused and looked hard at Hassan. The boy crouched at his feet, and seemed overwhelmed at having allowed the fact to escape. Captain Vipond, always of a suspicious nature, advanced and said:

"There is some imposture here."

At the same time he seized the boy's turban and snatched it from his head. There was a cry of astonishment. Long, silky hair escaped from its confinement and streamed down as far as the waist. "Who are you?" asked Vipond. "Why," said Dick, "it's Polly. It must be. Say, Polly, is it you?"

The Arab boy was detected. It was Polly, who had assumed this disguise to be near Dick, who was the only friend she had left in the world. "Yes," she answered, "forgive me, oh, forgive me, for coming after you, but I was so wretched and lonely that I did not know what to do."

"I placed you with friends."

"To me they were strangers. Tell me you will not be angry with me," she continued, her eyes swimming with tears. "Not I."

"You will not send me away to die in the forest?"

"Is it likely?"

"I only wanted to be near you and Messiter, and wait upon you," she said.

"My dear Polly," said Dick, "I'm glad we have found you out, because we can treat you as a lady should be treated, though we are not such swells as we were when we started."

Oh, don't mind me. Anything is good enough for me so long as I may stay with you."

Captain Vipond looked on curiously. "I must apologize, ma'm," he said, "for striking you just now."

"Don't mention it," she said. "I thought you were one of those lazy, obstinate Arabs with whom you can do nothing without the stick."

Dick took Polly's arm and led her a little on one side. The professor looked after them and grunted: "So she's a woman. Poof!" he cried. "What were we about not to know it. It's a strange country where women dress up as boys. Poof!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE UNKNOWN RIVER.

Dick was somewhat embarrassed at discovering Polly as he had done. "You little rascal," he said to her, "what do you mean by it?"

"I couldn't help it," she answered; "you would not let me come with you. My poor husband and father were both dead, and—"

Here the tears fell afresh. "Don't cry," interrupted Dick; "I'll take as much care of you as I can, Polly, but I'm afraid you'll have to continue to dress like a boy, for we have no girl's clothes to give you."

"Never mind that. I don't care for anything, so long as I am with you once more," she answered. Dick stooped over and kissed her. Her eyes shone so brightly, and she looked quite pleased and happy again. "You won't drive me away from you?" she continued, earnestly. "Not likely."

Messiter came up. "What have I done that you won't speak to me, Mrs. Snarley?" he said. "Oh, Harry," she answered, "how formal you are."

"Shall I call you Polly?"

"Always."

They shook hands and watched Ted, who was gradually getting the boat to shore. At last he succeeded in his efforts. It was a strongly-made cause, capable of holding a dozen, with stores. Ted had heard and seen what had taken place on shore. His astonishment was unbounded. "Well, I'm blown!" he exclaimed. Fancy it's being Miss Polly. I'm only an odd boy; but, hang it all, I've got my feelings!"

Suddenly the professor extended his arm. "Look out!" he cried. "I may be wrong, but there is something very unlike a Saxon coming toward us. Poof!"

Dick followed the direction indicated with his eyes. He saw a tall, handsome native, who was making signs of submission. "Halt!" he exclaimed. The man stopped, seeing a revolver leveled at his head. "No shoot, sir!" he ejaculated. "Me peaceful native."

"What do you want?"

"Me Mabruki. One Captain Speke's men, and me be good guide."

"Come nearer," said Dick. The man approached, bowing to the ground every now and then, and appearing very humble and submissive. "How did you know we were here?" asked Dick. "We meet the great master who row up the lake."

"Livingstone?"

"Yes, sir. He send me on to you."

This was rather an improbable story; but as they wanted a guide, Dick did not stay to cross-examine him. "Can you guide us to Ujiji?" he asked. "Think so, sir; me try any way."

"What do you say, Captain Vipond," said Dick; "shall we engage the fellow?"

"Yes," answered Vipond; "we can shoot him through the head at the first sign of treachery."

"Very well," said Dick; "you may consider yourself engaged, Mab—what did you say your ugly name was?"

"Mabruki, Bana."

"All right; help the boy to put the things in the boat, and let us see what stuff you're made of."

Mabruki set to work with a will. In half an hour all was in readiness for a start. Dick, with Mabruki's help, constructed an awning out of some tent canvass to keep the sun off the stern of the boat.

There were but two oars. It was impossible for Europeans to labor long in the burning sun. So to simplify matters a mast was made and a sail set.

"We are not in a hurry," remarked Dick, "and we may just as well take it easy."

It was an intense relief to guide smoothly over the surface of the silver lake after many weeks' weary tramp. A feeling of perfect happiness and contentment stole over them.

They let Mabruki take the helm, and as they knew nothing of the way, trusted implicitly to him. But Dick watched him very closely. He was prepared to send a bullet through his skull on the slightest provocation.

When traveling in a strange and savage country, with enemies on all sides, and death threatening you in a dozen different forms, you get to hold human life very cheaply indeed.

At each halt they caught fish of a palatable kind, which was a very welcome addition to their larder.

On the third day, when Ted was unpacking a bale of goods to get at something we wanted, a roll of newspapers fell out.

"What have you got there, Ted?" cried Dick. "Papers, sir."

"English?"

"Yes, sir. I remember now that Dr. Livingston gave them to me as he was going away, and I suppose they got packed up by mistake."

"You lubber," exclaimed Dick, "I've a good mind to rope's-end you."

"What for?" asked Ted. "Why, we haven't seen a newspaper for goodness knows how long. Hand them over."

The papers were about a dozen in number, and every one scrambled for a copy. The doctor had received them with the supplies brought him from the escort. It was quite a treat to get hold of them. Even Captain Vipond put aside his gloominess, and eagerly looked at the printed sheet.

"Here's something about you, Lightheart," exclaimed Vipond.

"Where, sir?"

"In the *Times*. Shall I read it?"

"Please," said Dick, looking up, astonished. Captain Vipond read a paragraph in the advertising columns. It ran thus:

"£100 REWARD.

"WHEREAS, a young gentleman named Richard Lightheart has mysteriously disappeared from Harrow House School, at Brighton, this sum will be gladly paid by his sorrowing relatives to any one who will give information of a satisfactory nature respecting him. He is supposed to have gone away with a friend named Messiter. Description—"

"Never mind that, sir," said Dick; "we shouldn't answer the description now, burnt as we are with the sun, and our clothes torn and ragged."

"It's odd," said Messiter, "that they should put that in. We wrote home and sent the letters by a passing ship."

"Perhaps it was lost; they evidently could not have received them," replied Vipond.

"I'm sorry for that," said Dick.

"They will be all the more pleased when we turn up," remarked Messiter.

"Is there anything about me, sir?" asked Ted. Everybody laughed.

"Who'd take any trouble about a swab like you?" answered Vipond.

"Thank you, sir. I'm an odd boy, but I've got my feelings," replied Ted, putting his hands in his pockets and walking up and down.

"Here's a paragraph about Mr. Crab," cried the captain.

"Indeed," said the professor, puffing himself up, "I thought a distinguished man like myself could not be long removed from civilization without being missed."

"Shall I read it?"

"By all means."

"We fear," ran the paragraph in question, "that the vessel in which Professor Crab, the Secretary to the Society for the Exploration of the Unknown Parts of the World, sailed, has been lost."

"However, it is a consolation to reflect that Professor Crab was a much overrated man, and will not be missed in the world of science, which he has never adorned."

"Poof!" cried the professor, "that was written by some enemy."

"They give it to you straight, sir," said Dick, smiling. "I'll astonish them when I do get back," he answered. Some hours were pleasantly passed in reading the papers.

News from home is always welcome when we are far, far away.

During the night the wind rose. It was blowing hard when the boat started in the morning, and dark, heavy clouds scudded over the face of the horizon.

The strange guide, however, remained at his post, and spoke not a word to any one. For some hours the boat flew before the fierce gale. Her course was so swift that it was evident she was in the drift of a current.

This became apparent when, towards noon, they found themselves between the banks of a wide river.

"What is this, and where are we going?" asked the professor.

The strange guide shook his head. They were flowing swiftly along the tide of an unknown river.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH.

PROFESSOR CRAB, now that he had nothing to drink, had become himself again. He made notes in his diary, and was very useful in taking the reckoning and helping the speculations of his companions with his scientific knowledge.

"It is clear," he said, "that we are not going to Ujiji."

"Clear as putty," replied Dick.

"People have declared," he continued, "that there is no flow of water out of these great lakes. We can prove there is, because we are being rapidly carried away by a current which takes us with it."

"Where are we going, sir?" asked Messiter.

"Impossible to say."

"Hav'n't we best try to stop?"

"The wind is too strong and the current too powerful. We must drift with it," replied the professor.

"Here, I say, you guide fellow, Mabruki," cried Dick.

"Bana," answered the guide, impassable as ever.

"Where are you taking us?"

"It all the storms, Bana. We come somewhere soon, and then land."

"That's very fine, but I'm hanged if I like the look of things at all," muttered Dick.

Captain Vipond did not seem to care. He smoked a cigar and read a paper. It was enough for him that he was flying somewhere away from Harold Dugard.

That was all he wished for. Messiter bent down to Dick, and said:

"There is something I don't like about our guide."
 "Same here," replied Dick.
 "Have you remarked one thing?"
 "What?"
 "He never takes his eyes off Vipond if he can help it."
 "Really?"
 "Yes."
 "I haven't noticed that," replied Dick.
 "And when he does look at him, it is a glare of such hatred as I never saw on a human being's face before, and should be very sorry to have on mine," said Messiter.
 "By jove, you're right! Spot him now. Look."
 Mabruki, as he called himself, fancied that he was unobserved.
 His gaze was riveted upon Vipond, and his handsome face was distorted with passion.
 His long, black beard seemed to twist and curl with rage, though its movements really, were only due to the wind.
 "He's a caution, isn't he?" said Messiter.
 "That fellow means mischief, dash his dark skin," replied Dick.
 "Watch him."
 "I will when we land for the night. He's got us into a jolly mess," said Dick.
 "He's some game on, take my tip," exclaimed Messiter.
 "Shouldn't wonder; but I'll keep my eye on him. What a stream this is!"
 "Isn't it? I don't think we could make the bank if we tried," replied Messiter.
 "Nor I. Wonder where we're going to."
 "Kingdom come, perhaps. I wish we were well out of this infernal country."
 "So do I," replied Dick, earnestly. "To tell the truth, I've had enough adventure in Africa, and having seen Livingstone, I should like to go home again."
 "Ditto," answered Messiter.
 There was a pause.
 Still the boat flew along, going at least ten miles an hour with wind and current.
 Mabruki stood at the helm like an avenging demon. Or the executioner of the decrees of fate.
 Polly was sitting athwart in the bows of the boat, and had heard the boys' conversation, though they had not noticed her.
 "Dick," she exclaimed.
 "Well, my little Polly Perkins of Paddington Green," he answered, gaily.
 "Is there any danger?"
 "Not that I'm aware of."
 "But you said you—you did not like our new guide."
 "No more I do," said Dick.
 "Look there," said Polly. "Do you see those mountains?"
 Dick turned round.
 Straight in front of them rose a majestic chain of mountains.
 They were about a dozen or fifteen miles off.
 "Scissors!" said Dick.
 "What is the matter now?" asked Messiter.
 "Why, look at the mountains," replied Dick, adding, as he lowered his voice, "don't say anything before Polly. It's bad form to frighten women. Come aft."
 "Is it all safe," asked Polly.
 "Quite, my dear. They are an unknown range of mountains, and as you've discovered them, we'll call them the Polly Perkins Mountains."
 "Now you're joking."
 "I'm not. They will be thrown to posterity by your pretty name. Stay where you are. We are going to talk to the captain."
 Polly tried to look reassured.
 But her mind was ill at ease.
 The boys clambered over the seats, and when they were close to the professor Dick spoke.
 "What do you think of affairs now, sir?" he said.
 "Something rotten in the state of Denmark, Lighthouse!" answered the professor.
 "You don't like the look of things?"
 "As I am a Saxon, I do not!"
 "Why not?"
 "Do you see those mountains?" said Mr. Crab.
 "Yes."
 "Well, does it not strike you that we are going straight into them?"
 "It does, by George!" exclaimed Dick.
 The river now flowed between two walls of rocks, getting gradually higher and steeper.
 This channel resembled a railway cutting.
 If the strength of the current had permitted them to row into the side, it would have been impossible to land.
 There was nothing for them but to glide onward.
 But whither?
 That was the all-absorbing question.
 It seemed as if the river flowed into a deep hole in the mountain.
 Perhaps it emerged into the open air on the other side. This, however, was mere conjecture.
 Who could tell?
 "Where are we going?" asked Dick, of the mysterious guide.
 "Me not know, Bana," was the reply.
 "What did you get us into such a mess for?"
 "Not my fault, Bana," answered Mabruki. "Blame the storm that drove us into the current of this unknown river."
 The professor took down the mast, and laid it with the sail flat in the boat.
 Amongst the stores the good doctor had given them were some lamps and a tin of paraffin to trim them with.
 Seizing one of these, the professor lighted it with a match.
 Then he fixed it carefully on the bow of the boat.
 "What are you doing, sir?" inquired Dick.
 "Providing for what may come," replied the professor.
 "How?"
 "If we are going through a tunnel, we shall want to see what we are about, shan't we? Poof!"

"Of course."
 "Leave it to me, then," said the professor.
 He took up an empty tin, which had held Australian preserved meat.
 Tearing it open, he fixed it behind the lamp.
 This made an excellent reflector, and threw the light well in front.
 "Now we are ready," he remarked complacently.
 The high walls of the cutting grew more rugged and precipitous.
 Before them frowned a majestic mountain.
 A short way in front they could distinctly see a dark tunnel.
 Towards this black and gaping hole the boat was being rapidly borne.
 Every one was profoundly interested.
 Captain Vipond could not conceal his anxiety to know where they were going.
 "Steer straight, and keep her from the rocks," exclaimed Dick.
 The guide nodded.
 Five minutes flew by.
 Polly crept up to Dick, and clung to his arm for protection.
 The mountain was close to them.
 With a roar and a rush the boat crept into a tunnel-like hole.
 The strength of the current increased.
 It appeared as if the water was rushing down an inclined plane.
 The fall was about one mile in fifty.
 They were going down into the bowels of the earth.
 A grim smile sat on the features of Mabruki. It seemed as if he had done this on purpose.
 The lamp threw out a bright light, revealing the rough roof of the tunnel and the sharp-pointed, jagged sides.
 No sound was heard save the roar of the swiftly-rushing river, hurrying no one knew whither.
 They had embarked on a strange voyage.
 What would be the end of it?
 None could tell.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALL WAS BLACK AS NIGHT.

THE situation in which our travelers found themselves was at once novel and embarrassing.
 Ever since they had been so mysteriously taken on board the strange ship in the gray dawn of the early morning, Dick and Messiter had experienced a series of remarkable adventures.
 But their present position was the most extraordinary that had yet befallen them.
 Behind and on each side all was dark as pitch.
 In vain they tried to discover one little ray of light.
 In front the lamp, which the professor had placed before the rough reflector he had hastily made, enabled the guide to steer the boat. Not a muscle of this strange being's face moved.
 He alone of all the party was calm, serene, one might almost say confident.
 A smile of satisfaction seemed to flit across his stern but handsome features.
 Standing up, with his head almost touching the roof of the tunnel, he guided the boat with marvelous dexterity.
 If a turning had to be made, he avoided the sharp and jagged edges of the rock.
 And when the course was clear, the boat shot along in the very center of the stream.
 Crawley Vipond sat still, just before the helmsman, with nervously twitching lips.
 It seemed as if they were all rushing to destruction.
 The professor, who was by no means a coward, had all his wits about him.
 This new adventure pleased him.
 Looking round, he said:
 "We have been to the bottom of the sea, and it appears that we are now going to the middle of the earth. Poof!"
 "Oh!" exclaimed Polly, anxiously, as she clung to Dick, "whatever shall we do when we get there?"
 "Colonize it," answered the professor; "settle there."
 "I hope not," said Dick; "I feel very unsettled at present."
 "There is no danger as yet," continued the professor. "But as I am a Saxon—poof?—I would rather be anywhere than here."
 "Why is there no danger?" asked Messiter.
 "The decline is easy; we are going down, but easily. It is like the descent of Avernus."
 "What is the decline?" said Dick.
 "As well as I can judge, about one mile in fifty—not a dangerous angle."
 "And at what rate are we going?"
 "Ten miles an hour, not more."
 "Then we shall be five hours going one mile into the earth," replied Dick.
 "Precisely. But we shall have to travel fifty miles in length to reach one in depth," said the professor.
 Dick sat on a seat, with Polly at his feet, on the bottom of the boat.
 Messiter and Ted were together, and did not like the looks of things at all.
 Professor Crab was very busy.
 He made notes and calculations in his pocket-book with a pencil by the aid of the imperfect light.
 Occasionally he looked at a thermometer.
 "The heat decreases slowly," he remarked. "Some people assert that the center of the earth is a mass of molten fire; that is not my opinion."
 "What do you think, sir?" asked Messiter.
 "I believe that the fires under the earth are burning themselves out. See how many extinct volcanoes we have. In the course of time the earth's crust will cease to be agitated by volcanic eruptions."
 "And then?"
 "Then I hold that the heat of the sun will not be enough for us. Cold will seize the earth, and all life, animal and vegetable, will perish."

"That's your idea of the end of the world?"
 "Certainly. We shall die of ice, not fire," said the professor.
 "Excuse me, sir," said Ted, "will the vol—what do you call 'em?"
 "Volcanoes, my lad."
 "Will they last my time?"
 "Hundreds of thousands of years."
 "That's a comfort. I'm only an odd boy, you know, sir; but I've got my feelings, and cold don't suit me unless there's a coal mine handy," said Ted.
 The professor regarded the thermometer.
 "Seventy-two degrees Fahrenheit," he said.
 "That is a nice temperature," replied Messiter.
 "It is now half-past five, by my chronometer, Greenwich time," cried Mr. Crab.
 "How long will our provisions last?"
 "We have rations enough for six weeks, if they are used sparingly, and water is plentiful."
 After this they relapsed into silence.
 Nothing was heard but the rushing of the black, gurgling river, which was speeding on no one knew whither.
 At nine supper was served out, and all laid down to rest as well as they could, save the guide.
 He remained at his post, as if he was unable to feel fatigue.
 The professor had timed their entrance to the tunnel at four o'clock precisely.
 At eight the next morning they had breakfast, consisting of biscuits, potted meats, and sardines.
 As they could make no fire, tea or coffee was out of the question, and they drank water, dipped out of the river in pannikins.
 They had now been sixteen hours in the tunnel.
 Consequently they had traveled a hundred and sixty miles.
 That is to say, according to the professor's calculation, that the stream carried them at the rate of ten miles an hour.
 And supposing his theory of the decline to be just, and that they were descending one mile in every fifty miles traversed, they could calculate the depth which they had reached to a nicety.
 They were exactly three miles and three hundred and fifty-four yards under the surface of the earth.
 About this time they began to experience a density of the atmosphere.
 The temperature declined rapidly.
 Instead of the thermometer marking seventy-two degrees Fahrenheit, it fell to forty-one.
 In the next hour it was thirty-seven degrees.
 Dick was very low-spirited and melancholy.
 "Come cheer up, old fellow," said Messiter.
 "I can't," replied Dick; "I've got the hump."
 They were interrupted by a cry from the professor.
 "The thermometer is rising again!" he exclaimed.
 "What does that indicate, sir?" asked Dick.
 "We are approaching some outlet. It must be so."
 Great anxiety was depicted on every countenance to know if this was true.
 The time passed slowly.
 Every hour caused the thermometer to rise slowly.
 That this was a good sign the professor had no doubt.
 At half-past eleven they had gone a hundred and ninety-five miles, and had reached a depth of three miles, one thousand five hundred and eighty-three yards.
 The minutes went more sluggishly than ever.
 Suddenly the guide exclaimed:
 "Light ahead!"
 Every eye was turned to the bow of the boat.
 Yes.
 In front of them a tiny, glimmering speck was seen.
 This gradually became larger and more distinct.
 The professor stood with his watch in his hand.
 By degrees the channel through which they were being carried, widened to a considerable extent.
 It became a huge cavern, which appeared to have been chopped out of the solid rock by the hands of giants.
 The light was bright and luminous, as if produced by electricity.
 No sunshine was visible.
 At last the boat shot out into a wide, open plain, through which the river shot with a serpentine course, its width being about the size of the Thames at Gravesend.
 The boys gave a cheer.
 "Twelve o'clock," said the professor; "consequently we have traveled two hundred miles in twenty hours, and we are at a depth of four miles below the surface of the earth."
 "I shall call this Lighthouse's Land!" cried Dick.
 "And Messiter River," put in Harry.
 The guide ran the boat into the shore; the boys sprang on land.
 Then the guide, thoroughly exhausted from want of sleep, sank down at the bottom of the boat, and was instantly unconscious.
 He had done his duty.
 All the party owed their lives to his skill and care, but exhausted nature could bear no more.
 Vipond and Polly followed the boys, all the party being profoundly astonished at finding another world, as it were, so far down in the depths of the earth.
 The professor was the last one of the party to land.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE UNDERGROUND WORLD.

THE light which surrounded them was more brilliant than that of the moon, which it somewhat resembled.
 When Dick's eyes became accustomed to the light, which required some time, after the intense darkness they had been wearied with for nearly the space of a day and night, he remarked that overhead there were masses of light clouds.
 These were capable of absorbing moisture, and no doubt could pour down torrents of rain.
 A storm in such a region would be a terrible tempest.
 On each side stretched forests of trees, around which twined thick creepers,

As there was no seasons here, the leaves, it was conjectured, did not fall.

They presented a curious, white, misty appearance, which arose from the absence of the sun's heat.

The flowers, which seemed to grow in great profusion, were colorless and devoid of smell.

It was the professor's opinion that Lighthouse Land, as Dick insisted upon having the region called, had belonged to the antediluvian epoch.

Many of the trees differed greatly from those on the earth.

The flora was that of the era before the flood.

There had probably been some terrible upheaving and rending asunder of the earth.

The result being that a large tract of country sank down into a hollow and had there remained.

Where the river flowed it was impossible to tell.

They could trace its winding course as far as the eye could reach.

The theory of Professor Crab that the land belonged to the era before the flood received convincing proof during the day.

Strange animals were seen on the skirts of the forest, wonderful creatures of immense stature such as Professor Owen has modeled out of the bones that have been dug out of the swamps of America and found in the caverns of Europe.

A herd of huge beasts, which Mr. Crab declared were mammoths, tore through the faded forest, and came down to the river's edge to drink.

In the river itself were some strange saurians, or lizards, with gigantic necks and legs, the remains of which have been discovered in the strata of Kent and Sussex.

Our travelers could fancy themselves carried back thousands of years.

That Messiter River should flow into the earth through its singular channel, Mr. Crab was not surprised.

He had always fancied that some of the vast lakes of Central Africa had some such outlet.

When the antediluvian monsters appeared, all seized their arms, but none fired, fearing to rouse the wrath of the creatures.

They, however, contented themselves with a look at the intruders upon their privacy, and swam or stalked away.

It was resolved to rest a few days, to recruit their strength, before proceeding further.

They christened the spot Crab's Encampment.

About this time Dick noticed that Ted paid Polly a great deal of attention.

There was no doubt that Ted was in love with the pretty wife of the unfortunate Mr. Snarley.

Knowing that he himself could never marry her, as he was engaged to Henrietta, Dick encouraged this growing passion.

He was pleased to see that Polly did not seem to find the attention paid her unpleasant.

Drawing Ted on one side, he said:

"Miss Polly would make you a nice little wife, Ted, when you are a year or two older."

"Do you think that she'd have me if I'd offer?" he replied.

"Why not? Don't be funky. Go in and win."

"I shouldn't like to pop the question and get the return ticket. If I am an odd boy, I've got my feelings, sir. Will you put in a word for me?"

"Of course I will. Wait till I get the opportunity," answered Dick, pressing his hand.

Crawley Vipond's spirits rose wonderfully after his arrival in Lighthouse Land.

He felt himself secure then from his enemy.

It did not seem to concern him whether they ever returned to civilization or not.

As long as his life was safe, he cared little for the comforts of Europe.

He consulted the professor as to the possibility of living in this underground country.

"It might be done," answered Mr. Crab. "I see no reason why life should not be supported here."

"You would leave me a supply of ammunition? I could make bows and arrows, and you can tell me what herbs and roots are fit to eat and supply the want of bread."

"Certainly."

"Then I shall end my days here," said Vipond.

"It is a strange place for a Saxon to live in," said the professor.

"I like solitude on earth, and have nothing to love, but all to fear," said Vipond, sadly.

"Yes, I know your history."

"When Adele died, the last link that bound me to the world was broken," cried Vipond.

"I imagined so when you determined to plunge into the heart of savage Africa."

"That was to avoid Harold Dugard?"

"Do you fear him so much?"

"Not now. I can laugh at him here. He would never think of following me down the dark, underground river."

The professor started and turned round.

"Did you not hear something?"

"What?" asked Vipond.

"I can't tell exactly," said the professor. "It was a maniacal sort of chuckle."

"There is no one but the guide near us," said Vipond.

"You mean Mabruki?"

"Yes, a poor, harmless sort of a fellow."

"I don't know so much about that," said the professor; "there is something very peculiar about that man."

"You are mistaken. He is a fool; that is all—and I don't think much of him as a guide or he would not have led us into this place."

"Ah! time will show," replied the professor, doubtfully.

"I have noticed," said Vipond, pursuing the subject nearest his heart, "a very comfortable cave near the mouth of the tunnel. If you will store provisions and powder and ball, such as you can spare for me, I shall want no other home."

"But, my dear sir," said the professor, "consider that if we leave you, the chances are you will stay here forever."

"Just what I want."

"Do you not fear solitude, buried in the bowels of the earth, amongst antediluvian monsters, and in this unnatural vegetation of a sunless world?"

"No."

"All this has no terrors for you?"

"None, in comparison with my fear for Dugard," replied Vipond.

"You cling to life?" said the professor, with a thoughtful air.

"Shall I tell you why?"

Mr. Crab nodded his head in token of assent.

"I was once of a religious turn of mind, and Dugard was right to make me his friend, for I was worthy of his esteem until the fiend tempted me."

"How?"

"By making me love my friend's wife, whom I stole from him."

"Sad thing," said Mr. Crab, shaking his head.

"It was more than that. I will call it a sin, a crime. All I want now is to make atonement for my offence. Here I can live like a hermit, and weary Heaven with prayers for forgiveness."

"That is why you wish to live?"

"Yes, for repentance purely. I only value life because it will give me a chance of obtaining pardon. Staying here will be a penance in itself, and no worse than the existence led by many a pious monk and holy man of old."

"I appreciate your motives," said the professor, "and trust sincerely that you will feel forgiven before you die."

"You will place no opposition in the way of my resolve?" said Vipond, gleefully.

"None at all."

"How long shall you stay here?"

"To-morrow we start again and follow the course of the river through this wonderful land," answered Mr. Crab.

"What expectation have you of escaping to the surface again?" asked Vipond.

"A faint hope that we may strike upon an extinct volcano somewhere or other, and so climb up through its galleries and shafts," replied the professor.

"Perhaps you will be glad to come back to my cave?"

"It may be so. We cannot return the way we came, I fear, because the force of the current would be too strong for us."

"Yes. You could not go more than half a mile an hour against the stream, and if you slackened your efforts you would be dashed back against the rocks."

"Exactly, and our strength would be exhausted long before we had got a third of the distance," replied Mr. Crab.

Vipond's determination was communicated to the members of the little party.

It created considerable astonishment among them.

But as he had never been a favorite with them, no one sought to dissuade him.

Such provisions and ammunition as they could spare were stored in the cavern he had selected.

A couple of blankets were given him for a bed.

If he had not to fear the heat of summer, neither had he to dread the cold of winter.

All the year round the climate was of the same even, bearable temperature.

The cave was approached by a few steps he cut in the rock with an axe.

This made him safe from the attacks of monsters.

The doorway was so small that he had to crawl in on his hands and knees.

While light was admitted by several pigeon-holes which he had made in the stone.

In the morning the professor was ready to start.

"Now, boys," he said, "say good-bye to Mr. Vipond."

They all shook hands with him.

Then they embarked on board the boat, Dick, Ted, and Messiter preparing to row ran-dan fashion, Ted having a pair of sculls in the middle.

"Stay," cried the professor, "where is Mabruki?"

The guide was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh," exclaimed Ted, "he told me, sir, that he was going to see what game he could kill, and would meet us."

"Where?"

"About five miles lower down the river, where he supposed we should halt for breakfast."

"Right," said Mr. Crab. "Pull away like Saxons, lads."

"We'll astonish the natives," exclaimed Dick.

"That you can't, for there are none said Messiter."

"Yes. There is one human, Mr. Vipond. He's a native. Off you go. Steer her straight, Poll."

"That's your sort," remarked Mr. Crab, as the boat shot off. "Nothing like Saxon lads for work. It's born in them."

In a short time Crawley Vipond was deserted.

He watched the little boat out of sight, and falling on his knees, covered his face with his hands.

Tears trickled through his fingers.

Deep sobs broke from him, and he murmured:

"Adele! Adele!"

His voice trembled with agony.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE AVENGER.

THE wretched man did not make any attempt to suppress his emotion.

He was alone.

No man could have been more so.

Buried four miles deep in the bosom of the earth, what eye, save that of Heaven, could behold him?

He could pour out his heart without fear of interruption.

All at once the clouds began to darken.

A moaning, whistling, shrieking wind arose, agitating the atmosphere.

Flashes of forked lightning ran down from the clouds, which came close to the earth.

These in time became sheets of fire.

Truly horrible and deafening peals of thunder reverberated through the cavernous recess.

An awful storm had burst without any warning.

It was much more dreadful in its nature than any Vipond had ever witnessed in Equatorial Africa.

Yet he did not seem to notice it.

The rain fell in torrents, but he heeded not the deluge.

The man's mind was on fire, and what was the war of the elements to him?

Less than nothing.

In the midst of this awful conflict of nature, when the blinding lightning was playing round his bowed head,

when the cannoning thunder crashed in his ears, and the floods of rain fell upon his defenseless form, a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

He moved not.

A voice, which sounded to him as a revelation from the world, spoke.

"Crawley Vipond!"

The wretched man started as if the breath of so gigantic saurian had fanned his pallid cheek.

He removed his hands from his blanched face.

His eyes turned upward and sought the speaker.

Then a trembled cry broke from him.

Such a despairing, wailing, startled cry as the doomed ones may utter on that dread day when all must stand before the seat of judgment.

Before him stood Mabruki the guide.

But how altered!

The paint was washed off his face, the hat removed from his grizzled hair, and the well-known features revealed to view.

It was no longer Mabruki.

The disguise was cast off.

Crawley Vipond was crouching at the feet of Harold Dugard.

The one resembled a crushed worm writhing on the path in hopeless anguish.

The other was calm, majestic, and pitiless.

His handsome features were lighted up with a wrathful fire.

He came as the avenger of blood!

"You!" grasped Vipond; "you here? Oh, God! this is too much."

"Crawley Vipond," replied Dugard, fearless of the lightning and regardless of the thunder, "I have lived for this day."

"I thought you far away."

"Ha! You little imagined I would follow you to the bowels of the earth. You did not dream that in Mabruki, the simple guide, you would find your fate."

He paused.

"None of you thought," he went on, "that I purpose-ly led you to the mouth of the subterranean river, of which I had heard from the natives, it being my purpose to hurry you to destruction, if I destroyed myself."

"Spare me! spare me!" whined Vipond.

"Never!"

"I had intended to pass my remaining days here in solitude and prayer."

"You must die."

"Oh, no, no, no! You will not, cannot kill me with all my sins upon my head!" shrieked Vipond.

Again that strong voice spoke with a ring like the knell of fate:

"You must die."

"It is murder," said Vipond, despairingly.

"Call it what you like. I am judge and executioner."

"Is it not enough that you have driven me from civilization, and that I am content to live here, removed from my fellow creatures, like a recluse?"

"It is not enough," said Harold Dugard.

Vipond grovelled on the damp, streaming earth in speechless agony.

The storm increased in violence.

The rolling thunder and the lightning seemed to encircle them in its awful violence and deadly embrace.

Dugard bared his bosom to the tempest.

"Do your worst!" he cried, waving his arm. "I like the anger of nature. It is stern, relentless, furious, like my own. Crash, thunder! flash, lightning! and celebrate the just execution of as vile a wretch as ever disgraced the fair surface of the sunny earth!"

Crawley Vipond saw a merciless light kindle in his enemy's eye.

A murderous-looking knife flashed in the bluish glare of the lightning.

He determined to make a last appeal.

"By the memory of Adele, she who is now in Heaven, have pity on me," he said.

He looked up beseechingly.

Dugard's face grew black as night.

"Talk not of her. Dare not to mention the name of my wife unless you want toadden me!" he cried.

He raised his knife to strike.

At that moment a ball of fire fell from the clouds and struck Vipond.

It circled all round him.

It bathed him, as it were, in a liquid stream of molten fire.

But one cry escaped him.

A feeble, heart-broken, spasmodic utterance, and all was over.

He fell to the earth, a charred and blackened mass.

For awhile Dugard was horror-stricken.

Then, slowly replacing his knife in his belt, he gazed placidly at the corpse.

"It is Heaven's work," he muttered.

His hand was guiltless of his enemy's blood.

Yet he was avenged.

At the same instant the rain ceased to fall; the thunder rolled off.

The lightning became less vivid.

Evidently the storm was subsiding.

It was as if all the fiends had come with thunder and lightning to carry off their victim.

And when their task was accomplished, they were appeased, and their wrath was ended.

Dugard retired to a short distance from the spot. Scarcely had he done so, when he observed a gigantic saurian emerge from the river.

It could smell the burning flesh.

Advancing to the spot where the body was lying, the long-necked lizard did not observe Dugard.

Seizing the corpse in its hideous jaws it retreated to the stream. Then it plunged below the surface with its ghastly prey.

"It was the will of God!" ejaculated Dugard.

So perished the cowardly betrayer of his friend's wife. The bad friend, the wicked man, who in vain had sought refuge and safety in the bowels of the earth.

His sin had found him out. The arm of death is long, and the hand merciless.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WINDING GALLERIES

An hour afterwards, and the sky was again calm and luminous.

Dugard hastened along the bank of the river.

He could not afford to lose sight of his companions.

Many heads are better than one, and in his case union was strength.

He did not wish his bones to bleach in the awful solitude in which he was.

There was horror in the bare idea.

Peculiar though Professor Crab was, Dugard had confidence in his scientific attainments and judgment.

By dint of walking and running, he reached the spot where the little party had camped out for breakfast.

They stared when they saw him.

"Who are you?" cried Dick. "You've got the dress of the guide and the face of Dugard!"

"I am Harold Dugard," was the quiet reply.

"Where is the guide, and how did you get here?"

"We are one and the same person. I have removed all traces of my disguise."

"And Vipond?" asked Dick.

A suspicion of the truth crossed his mind.

"Is dead."

Dugard pronounced these words in a solemn tone. He was about to sit down on the ground by the side of the professor.

The latter, however, moved.

"Excuse me," he said; "I don't like to be too near a man who will murder a defenseless fellow-creature in a fearful place like this. Poof!"

"I did not kill him."

"No?"

"He did not fall by my hand," said Dugard.

"How then?"

"By the hand of Heaven. You saw the storm?"

"Rather," said Dick; "we're not dry yet."

A fiery bolt came out of a cloud and burned him, after which a monster emerged from the river and carried off the body in his jaws.

Every one shuddered.

"His blood is not on my hands, but my task is accomplished nevertheless. I had sworn to slay him whenever the chance offered. I was saved the trouble, that is all," continued Dugard.

"I thought you weren't a native all along," remarked Dick.

"And I," said the professor, "had my suspicions from the first that you were a Saxon. Poof!"

"The deception was not discovered anyhow."

"Well," cried Mr. Crab, "as you were clever enough to get us into this remarkable place, perhaps you will kindly exercise your ingenuity in getting us out again."

"I wish I could," answered Dugard.

"Are not those mountains over there?" asked Dick.

He pointed to the right.

"Either mountains or shadows," said the professor.

"Let us cross the river and go to them. You say the whole of this place is of volcanic origin; perhaps they are not all solid."

"I should like to hear you reason for that opinion," said the professor.

"A mountain which is a volcano shoots out lava, does it not?"

"Certainly."

"In order to do that it must have galleries or passages, call them what you like."

"Granted."

"Very well," continued Dick. "You say that volcanoes about here are extinct, that is to say, they have ceased to throw out fire and lava?"

"Such is my belief."

"Then if these passages exist, they are safe for traveling up somehow."

"If you can find them," put in Messiter.

"I confess," said the professor, "that my thoughts have been running in the same channel as Lightheart's. There may be some such exit for us."

"Allow me," exclaimed Dugard, "to tell you what I heard from an old native who was with Mirambo's men."

"What was that?"

"You do not suppose that it was all chance which led me to steer you towards this mysterious river which brought us here?"

"Indeed, but I did though," exclaimed the professor.

"If I had suspected treachery, I would have shot you at the helm. Poof!"

Dugard smiled sadly.

"It was not my fault," he answered. "I had to accomplish my revenge."

"What did your native swell tell you?" asked Dick.

"He said there was a legend amongst his tribe, which lived north of the Tanganyika."

"To what effect?"

"That a river ran out of the lake, and buried itself in the earth, till it came to an underground world."

"How did they know that?" said Messiter.

"Many years ago one of their men, when out fishing, had been drawn down by the current."

"Just as we were."

"Precisely," replied Dugard. "He saw all the wonders that we have seen."

"And I suppose," said Dick, "felt as we do now, and wanted to get up again."

"He did more, he got up."

Every one started with surprise.

"Then, I presume, you know the secret?" said the professor.

"Not exactly."

Their countenances fell again.

"The report goes," Dugard went on, "that he did make his escape as you suggested, Lightheart, and that he placed four pieces of rock one on the top of the other at the entrance to the cavern which leads to the world, so that if any other member of his tribe shared his peril, he might know how to extricate himself."

"Four bits of rock," said Dick, thoughtfully; "I'm jiggered if that's much to go upon."

"It will be a twister to find them," observed Messiter.

"He is said to have carved his name on the outside rock," added Dugard.

"I thought they didn't know how to write, those niggers?" said Dick.

"That's a floorer," exclaimed Messiter.

"I think not," remarked the professor; "a chief or elder is generally known by some sign—for instance, one man may be called the bird, another the giraffe, a third the lion."

"That is so," exclaimed Dugard; "and when I said the man carved his name, I ought to have said his sign or token."

"That makes me look small," answered Dick.

"It's a great pity boys will be so fast," observed the professor.

"So it is, sir," said Dick.

"In these days boys think they know as much as men."

"As some men. Men like you, I mean," exclaimed Dick.

"You're a donkey, Lightheart," exclaimed the professor.

"Am I sir? I always thought there was some sort of relationship about us."

"Do be quiet, and don't worry one," said the professor, angrily. "Boys are like wasps. Hold your tongue. I want to talk to Mr. Dugard."

"Just now you wouldn't let him sit near you," said Dick.

"Ah, the case is altered. I thought him a murderer, but now I am glad to have him amongst us again."

"Yes, when you think you can get something out of him."

"Be silent, Lightheart," shouted the professor.

"Shan't," replied Dick. "I am as much master here as you are. Go and get tight if you can."

The professor looked very much grieved.

"I am not angry with you, Lightheart," he said, after a pause, "but I am sorry to think that that you could so far forget yourself as to insult a man of my age, and under such circumstances."

"You know you have been getting drunk ever since we got into the middle of Africa," remarked Messiter.

"I have got to learn what you have to do with the matter, Messiter," said the professor, mildly.

"Lightheart is my friend, and I won't see him bullied."

"Nor I," said Ted; "I'm only an odd boy, but so help me never, I'm not going to see my young master set upon."

"No one wants to bully him," answered the professor; "I only wish to say that if I have been a little foolish, it was because I am older than you, and the climate affected me."

"Ahem!" said Dick, coughing.

"You may cough as much as you like, and turn me into ridicule, Lightheart, but I don't deserve it."

"Drop it then," answered Dick, "only I don't like people giving themselves airs when there is no occasion for it."

"It's my opinion," remarked Ted, "that all those scientific coves are all humbugs."

"Boy," cried the professor, "be silent!"

"Couldn't I if I tried, sir; talking's born in me like it is in a woman. Isn't it, Miss Polly?"

"I'm sure I don't talk much," replied Polly.

"Then you're not like the rest of your sex," said Ted.

"Lor! how my poor mother used to jaw father, after she'd had a quarter of gin; there was no stopping of her."

Harold Dugard waved his hand.

"It seems to me, my friends," he said, "that you appear to forget we are in the most peculiar position that travelers were ever in before."

"Bar this old nigger cove you were talking about," said Dick.

"That is what I was coming to."

"Who hadn't got a real name and couldn't write," continued Dick. "What was his sign, and how did he draw it?"

"His sign was a giraffe, but how he drew it I can't tell," replied Dugard.

"It don't matter much," said Ted; "I see a giraffe once, and he's a sort of critter you can't very well mistake, draw him anyhow you will."

"What's he like, Ted?" asked Dick.

"Like, sir? Why, I'll tell you what he's like, Master Dick. D'y'e ever see a deddy-long-legs spider?"

"Yes."

"Very well, you take his legs—and did you ever see a pump handle?"

"Lots of times."

"That'll do for the neck. You take a gentleman's portmanteau for the head, and a whopping big Bologny sausage for the belly, and you'll have a giraffe."

"Rather a difficult thing to draw, according to your description," replied Dick, laughing.

"I ain't much of a drawer," said Ted. "I can sculp better."

"What sculpturing have you done?"

"Oh! cut old women out of wood, and done funny little things in chalk. Give me a little bit of sandstone and I'll sculp the professor, only it wouldn't be easy to make him as ugly as he looks."

"I'll box that lad's ears if you don't keep him quiet," answered the professor.

Ted jumped up and put himself in a fighting attitude.

"Come on, governor," he said; "I'm game for a try-on."

The professor hung back.

Ted, however, advanced, dancing about like a wild Indian.

He managed to touch the professor lightly on the nose.

"First for the boy!" he exclaimed.

"Take him away, Lightheart, or I shall do him an injury!" roared the professor.

He applied his hand to his nose, and withdrew it tinged with blood.

"In these horrid regions one cannot make sure of pocket handkerchiefs," he added.

"Mine's been gone long ago," said Dick.

"Try the tail of your shirt, sir," suggested Messiter.

"That would not amount to much," replied Mr. Crab, laughing in spite of his pain and annoyance.

"I know I should strip badly," put in Dick.

"There is not a street Arab in London who couldn't put out more linen than I've got left," observed Ted.

There was a general laugh at these confessions.

"Since those rascally Pagazi fellows stole all our supplies and togs, and bolted," continued Dick, "I haven't known what it is to have a change of any sort."

"Come on," cried Ted, again, "unless you want me to give you the coward's blow."

"Shut up," exclaimed Dick.

"Well, sir, I'm only an odd boy, but I've got my feelings, and that old swab keeps on—"

"Shut up, I say," repeated Dick.

Ted was silent.

"If you have finished quarreling amongst yourselves, said Dugard, "I will venture humbly to suggest that we cross the river, and proceed to look for our landmark."

"By all means," answered the professor.

The boat was launched, and all got on board.

If the boys had despised Vipond, they were not fond of Dugard.

During their intercourse with him, he had been stern and morose, cherishing a vengeance in his heart, which to young minds was the reverse of amiable.

There was no sympathy between him and them.

But in the terrible situation in which they were, they felt glad to travel under his guidance.

He alone seemed to know how to get them out of it.

The dangers they had yet to encounter were matter of conjecture.

Dick was gay and full of spirits.

He chaffed the professor and laughed and joked with everybody.

"I think," he said, when he had crossed the river, "that this is a humbugging sort of place after all. I should like to go lower."

"Perhaps you will some day," said Messiter, with a grin.

"No cheek, Harry," said Dick, warningly.

"It will be difficult to get anyone to believe that we have really been here," remarked the professor.

"People are always slow to believe great truths," said Dick. "Wasn't the first Frenchman who discovered the use of steam put in an asylum?"

"Yes, where he died."

"Mind they don't lock you up, sir."

"No fear, my boy," said the professor. "I am a Saxon, and Saxons never tell lies. Poof!"

They walked some distance along the base of what seemed a range of mountains.

It was in reality the northern side of a large hollow in which the underground world was situated.

Suddenly Dick espied four blocks of stone standing one on the top of the other.

"Hurrah!" he cried, "here are the landmarks; let us see if the token is on them."

They approached, burning with curiosity.

After some search they discovered a rough drawing of a giraffe.

"That's it," said Dugard; "my information was correct, and we are not the first to tread on this wonderful ground."

"The passage leading upwards must be hereabouts," said the professor.

In fact, the entrance to the long chain of galleries which led to the surface of the earth was found to be situated just behind the rocks.

"There is one thing I have omitted to mention," exclaimed Dugard.

All looked curiously at him.

"My informant told me that a wonderful tribe of blacks inhabited the caves in the upper part of the mountain."

"Ah!" said the professor, "I have heard of them; they live entirely underground."

"Yes, and are very wild and savage. They are said to worship a hideous idol, to which they offer human sacrifices."

"Then it won't do to fall into their hands," said Dick.

"Not much," exclaimed Ted; "I'm only an odd boy, but I've got my feelings, and don't want to be offered up to no idols."

"Think we'd better hand over Polly to them as a sacrifice," said Dick, with a wink at Messiter.

"As far as that goes," replied Ted, "I'd rather give my life than they should have Miss Polly."

He cast an amorous glance at her as he spoke.

"It is not their custom to sacrifice more than one," exclaimed Dugard. "If a party of a dozen fell into their hands they would let the others go, after offering one to their deity."

"It's a pity you didn't keep Vipond," said Dick.

"Why?"

"I consider he's been wasted. He'd have done splendidly for the idol."

"Do not fear," said Dugard, with a look of sublime resignation; "My task is done. I have nothing left to live for, and if any life is required it shall be mine."

They regarded him with a look of admiration.

After all this man was a hero.

There was something inexpressibly grand about the indifference he felt for existence.

When they first knew him he laughed at danger.

What a loss his energies and abilities were to a world he would have adorned!

But the iron had entered into his soul.

His life had been blighted by Vipond's treachery, and, though he was too good to take the life which was noth his own to do as he liked with, he did not shrink from death if it would benefit his companions.

The professor now busied himself in arranging the burdens that each were to carry.

They might expect a wandering journey of some days and nights in the intricacies of the extinct volcano.

It was necessary to carry food.

Water, too, would be badly wanted, and lamps were indispensable.

The day was nearly over when all was in readiness.

Professor Crab would have waited for a night's rest before starting.

But the impatience of the boys prevailed upon him to begin the ascent at once.

Dick said he wasn't at all tired, and they could sleep in the mountains when they felt exhausted.

So at five o'clock in the afternoon they commenced their memorable journey.

They had been two days in Lighthouse Land.

It was with regret that the professor quitted Messiter River without exploring it further.

He longed to know what became of it.

Many problems were left unsolved.

For instance, he did not know whether the mysterious region was inhabited or not.

Perhaps, if he had pursued his explorations, he might have found the remains of a race of men living before the flood.

We are told that there were giants in those days.

With a sigh he gave the word to enter the narrow aperture in the rock.

This they had christened, "Dugard's Gallery."

Dangers were before them, but they were so used to perils of all sorts that if their hearts beat more quickly than before, it was with hope, not fear.

The passages or galleries were in places dreadfully uneven.

It was with the utmost difficulty that the six travelers picked their slow way along.

At times they came to deep fissures, which required great care to cross.

One false step might have precipitated the leader millions of feet into the interior of the earth.

But that false step was never made.

The self-constituted leader was Harold Dugard, who was full of caution and sleepless vigilance.

Occasionally the galleries narrowed so much that every one had to sink on his hands and knees and crawl along.

At other times they would branch out into vast, cavernous recesses, resembling the interior of cathedrals, their curiously shaped arches glittering with crystals, and flinging back with sparkling disdain the puny light of the oil lamps.

It was in one of these magnificent chambers that the first halt was called.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CAVE DWARFS.

FOOTSOKE, ragged, dirty, worn, and bloodstained from wounds occasioned by coming in contact with rough, jagged edges of rock, the party sat down to their humble meal.

There was no necessity to set a watch.

What could interfere with them, buried as they were in the heart of a mountain, honeycombed by the worn-out fires of cycles long gone by.

Tired and weary they sank to rest.

It was a weird but striking scene.

The lamps burnt dimly, but with sufficient light to throw out in bold relief the most salient points of the large hall.

Perhaps years ago, the adventurous African, whose voyage had become a tradition with his tribe, had halted in this very chamber.

The sleeping forms lay about in various attitudes.

Not a sound but their deep breathing broke the awful silence of this dread abode.

In time they awoke one by one, made a frugal meal, drank sparingly from their water gourds, and trimmed the lamps.

Excelsior was their watchword.

Higher and yet higher.

Their brains teemed with recollections of the extraordinary world they had just quitted.

Verily it seemed as if there was no end to the wonders of nature.

Again they started.

The galleries wound in and out; sometimes they had half a dozen ways to choose from, and would take the wrong one, having to return after toiling along for miles and coming face to face with a strong wall of impenetrable granite.

For three days and nights they wandered through the bosom of the rock.

Their ascent was gradual, but still they knew that each step took them nearer to the wished for goal.

Behind them was solitude, oblivion, death.

Before them freedom, civilization, life and hope.

On the morning of the fifth day the ascent became more precipitous.

Rough, upright shafts had to be climbed and this was done by the aid of ropes and cutting steps in the hard rock with an axe. It was slow work.

If liberty had not beckoned to them, they would have given way to despair.

Their energies would have been exhausted, and the gallant band have found an everlasting home for their bones in the silent lava roads of the mountain.

A nameless and unknown tomb.

Shrinking with horror from such a fate, they pressed on.

Polly bore herself bravely.

Never did one word of weariness or reproach fall from her lips.

To aggravate their distress, the supply of water began to fail them.

Half rations were only served out.

On the commencement of the seventh day the path was more even.

Then came a deep shaft, which took them hours to climb up.

But this was the last of their difficulties.

Having reached the top, they walked along until they came to a series of chambers, which, if not the work of men's hands, had evidently been occupied by human beings.

Rough flint implements were lying about, and rude articles made of clay.

It occurred to every one that they were approaching the cave of the tribe which lived underground.

The professor had read wild legends related by African travelers of these singular beings.

From the days of Herodotus to those of Livingstone, Africa has been the land of romance for travelers.

But all agreed that the people were a tribe of savage dwarfs.

They offered up human sacrifices to a hideous idol, a sort of Juggernaut, whose wrath could, according to their ignorant and superstitious ideas, only be appeased by the shedding of blood.

It was necessary to pass through their abodes to reach the earth's surface.

What mercy could they expect from such savages?

Perhaps all the members of the party would be offered up as living victims to the idol.

It was with a feeling of nervous apprehension that they pursued their way.

Each carried a loaded revolver.

Their rifles had been left in Lighthouse Land, as being too heavy and cumbersome to take with them in the ascent.

Could they fight their way through the dwarfs?

It was doubtful.

Dugard advised that no resistance should be made, as the dwarfs were known to possess poisoned arrows, and being very numerous, would have the advantage over a mere handful of half-starved, worn-out travelers.

Passing on, they suddenly reached a large, vaulted chamber, dimly lighted by earthen pans filled with palm oil, on which floated bits of pith, serving for wicks.

In this hall were a number of women and children.

They were veritable dwarfs.

It seemed as if they had penetrated to a colony of Tom Thumbs.

The height of the women was hardly two feet.

While the children were nothing but pignies.

Dick could not help laughing at the idea of there being anything formidable about such apparently contemptible creatures.

Directly they were perceived coming from the bowels of the earth, hideous cries were raised.

A chattering as of a multitude of monkeys took place.

"Hark at the abortions," said Dick.

"Don't they kick up a jolly row, that's all," remarked Messiter.

They stood irresolute, not knowing whether to advance or retire.

Some of the women ran along another passage.

"They're gone to fetch their husbands," observed the professor.

"I know women could talk in all countries," said Dick; "but those mites in a cheese lick all creation."

"Oh, Dick," said Polly, "how you run women down."

"Sir," said Ted, "you're a little too hard on the sex, sir."

"Wait till you're married, Ted," answered Dick, and Miss Polly will give you what for if you don't mind your p's and q's and come home early."

Polly grew red and was about to say something, when a score or more men dwarfs rushed into the room.

They stared anxiously at the intruders.

All were armed with bows and arrows and spears, with flint heads, sharply pointed.

Advancing fearlessly to the whites, they examined them closely.

Their remarks were made in a tongue which was perfectly unintelligible to the travelers.

Dugard made signs.

He pointed to himself and bowed his head in token of submission.

Then he extended his hand to his companions, and indicated that they were to be allowed to go up.

Those signs seemed to be understood by the dwarfs.

Some of them produced wisps of strong grass, with which they bound all the arms of the captives.

"I don't like this," said Dick; "we ought to have had a fight for it."

"Dugard has got his plan," replied Messiter.

"He means to sacrifice himself for us," said the professor. "He is a fine fellow. Poof!"

When the whites were secured, they were led along the passage, followed by a chattering, screaming mob.

Dugard was erect and firm.

Fear seemed to him, as it was to Nelson, unknown, so gallant was his bearing.

They wound in and out for some distance, forming a singular and grotesque procession.

At length they reached a vast area, grander and more spacious than any they had yet seen.

It was lighted by holes in the rock, which admitted the rays of the sun.

This showed clearly that they were not far from the surface of the earth.

At one end of the vault was a hideous idol.

It had been made of blocks of carved wood, and was ornamented with skulls.

The head of each victim sacrificed to it being fastened to some portion of the body.

The effect was horrible in the extreme.

The dwarfs continued to arrive from all quarters until fully two thousand were assembled in the chamber.

Dick now saw that Dugard was right.

It would have been impossible to fight their way through the underground passages against such an overwhelming force.

They might have discharged their revolvers over and over again.

A hundred or more dwarfs would have fallen before the withering fire.

But others would have taken their places.

Poisoned arrows and sharp spears would have done their work, and the travelers must have perished like rats in a pit.

Several dwarfs, who were chief men or priests, made a circle in front of the idol.

Others kept the crowd back.

They were all naked, with the exception of a strip of dirty-looking matting round the loins.

From the curiosity they evinced it was fair to presume that they had never seen a white man before.

Indeed, no traveler has yet given an eye witness's account of these singular people.

Our party were the first to visit them.

Dugard turned to his friends.

"Good-bye," he said; "I think your lives will be safe by the sacrifice of mine."

A look such as Regulus may have worn when he started to return to Carthage, crossed his noble face.

"Remember the unhappy Harold Dugard in your prayers," he continued, "and if you speak of me, say I died doing my duty."

As he ceased speaking, four of the principal dwarfs seized him.

He was led to the idol.

They forced him on his knees.

One dwarf, taller and stronger than the rest, advanced, holding a wooden sword.

It was sharpened with marvelous dexterity.

Instantly a dread silence fell upon all.

Each voice in that mighty assemblage was hushed.

The executioner raised his sword.

There was a rushing sound through the air, a dull, thudding noise, and the head was severed from the body.

The guillotine could not have done its work more thoroughly.

What an end for the noble Harold Dugard!

Dick turned away from the sickening spectacle.

A deep sob broke from him.

He heard the shout which came from the dwarfs.

But he did not see the gory, dripping head raised in triumph. He did not see it fixed to the breast of the monstrous idol.

He was sick at heart and faint with horror.

This scene was the most terrible and barbarous of all he had passed through.

CHAPTER XXX.

STRANGE CONDUCT OF THE PROFESSOR.

THE dwarfs did not leave the remainder of the captives long in doubt as to their intentions respecting them.

Half-a-dozen of the chiefs pushed them out of the great hall, and thrust them along till they came to a flight of steps cut in the rock.

This conducted them to the light of heaven once more.

The country was of the usual rich and luxuriant character.

Undulating plains were fringed with groups of magnificent trees, and a finer landscape could not be imagined.

Their eyes were not allowed much time to dwell upon the beauties of nature.

A howling, yelping crowd pursued them.

Men, women, and children had supplied themselves with thick reed canes.

Setting up a shout, the dwarfs attacked the party furiously with their weapons, forcing them to run for their lives.

Bound as they were, they did this with difficulty.

But fear and pain lent them wings.

For nearly a mile they were followed and beaten, and only then did the savage dwarfs desist from their efforts.

At length they grew tired of the punishment and fell off, returning to their caves and leaving the professor, the boys and Polly sore and bleeding from the shower of blows they had been compelled to receive.

"We are well out of that with our lives," said Dick.

"So I think. As I am a Saxon, I never had such a beating before," remarked the professor.

Poor Polly fainted with pain and fright.

"I ache all over," said Messiter. "Bless those dwarfs, I should like to warm their skins a bit."

"Hold hard, Master Dick," said Ted; "I'll bite your bonds with my teeth—they are only reeds—and then you can undo the lot of us."

"Fire away, quick!" answered Dick, tingling all over with pain from the effect of the blows.

Ted set to work, and his teeth being young and sharp, he speedily set his young master at liberty.

Dick in his turn unfastened the rest.

Polly still remained insensible, and it was some time before she came to herself, her tender skin being black and blue from the strokes.

"With Dugard's terrible fate before their eyes, they could not help thinking themselves fortunate in escaping with their lives."

"The little beggars can hit," said Dick; "I never had such a hiding in my life."

He rubbed his back, arms and legs with a rueful air.

Their position was not a pleasant one.

They were in a wild and unknown region, with only the charges they had in their revolvers.

No food, water or ammunition.

It was useless to stay where they were, for the dwarfs might return and murder them.

So when Polly was sufficiently recovered to walk, leaning on Ted's arm, they held a council of war, determining to push on till nightfall, shoot what they could on the way, and eat it when they stopped.

They walked for several miles, and fortunately killed one antelope, which supplied them with food.

About the same time they struck a small stream flowing eastward.

Camping for the night, and keeping watch for wild beasts, they waited for the morning.

Next day they were too stiff to move.

When they were well enough to march again, they resolved to follow the stream, as in all likelihood it flowed into some lake.

Nor were they mistaken.

In three days they came to a vast body of water.

By the side of this they wandered for fourteen days, living on what they brought down by chance shots.

At the end of this time their revolvers were empty, and starvation stared them in the face.

Luckily, as despair was beginning to take possession of them, they came upon a boat full of fishermen.

They were Arab chiefs, with one or two Turks and some natives, the leader of the party being Hadji Baba, an old merchantman who was settled at Ujiji.

He told them that the lake they had been following was the famous Tanganyika, and that he and his party were engaged in fishing.

He undertook to convey them to Ujiji, for which promise they were very thankful, as they knew they would there meet with a caravan which would take them by way of Unyanyembi to the coast.

There was one obstacle in the way; they had no money or valuables of any kind.

The rich men of the expedition, Dugard and Vipond, were both dead.

Neither Dick, Messiter, Ted, nor Polly were worth a farthing, the rascally Pagazi having robbed them of all they possessed.

Nor was the professor able to raise any cash out of England.

This difficulty was, however, made less serious by an announcement made by Hadji Baba, to the effect that the famous trader Sampson Jack, of Zanzibar, who had defeated Mirambo, was expected to buy ivory in about a month's time.

That Sampson Jack would befriend them Dick felt sure.

He had a claim upon his gratitude for saving the life of his daughter during the stirring time which saw the burning of Yamwezi.

So it was with much better spirits that they all took boat with the kindhearted Hadji Baba, and started along the lake for Ujiji.

The Turks and the Arabs listened to the account of their adventures, which Dick gave them, with incredulity.

They did not believe in the story of the mysterious rivers and the underground world.

Of the dwarfs they had heard.

But on the whole the narrative was received with unbelief.

"What is this you tell us?" said Hadji Baba, wagging his beard. "Do you want us to eat dirt and laugh at our beards? By the bones of the prophet, it is too much!"

Dick did not argue the point.

The professor, on the other hand, was irritable, and would not bear contradiction.

He had an attack of fever, which lasted three days and left him very weak.

About this time every one noticed a great change in him.

He was absent and odd in his manner, his memory seemed to be affected, and he would talk childishly to himself.

One day, when they were nearing Ujiji, he said to Dick:

"Who is this Hadji that he should laugh us to scorn? Was I not born before the flood?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick, staring at him curiously.

"Certainly. Do you not know that you found me in the underground world?"

"What are you, sir?" asked Dick, thinking it best to humor him.

"An absurd question. You know well enough that I am an antediluvian wild ass."

The professor said this so gravely that Dick burst out laughing.

"Beware, Lighthead. It is my nature to be savage. I have lived now for centuries. The wild ass is mentioned in Scripture," said the professor, warningly, "and was a vicious beast."

"But animals can't speak, sir."

"Now they cannot. Before the flood they could. You forget where you found me."

At this Dick laughed again, louder than ever.

The professor, in a frenzy, flew upon him, attacking him with hands and feet.

Unable to resist the assault, Dick fell overboard, and was soon struggling in the water.

"Hullo, Dick," cried Messiter, "where are you off to?"

Dick struck out for the boat, and was soon hauled on board.

"Keep that old lunatic quiet, will you?" said he, shaking himself.

"What's the row?"

"Mr. Crab's gone cranky. He's off his chump all the way, as clean as a whistle; he fancies himself an antediluvian wild ass, and because I said he wasn't he went and chucked me overboard."

"So I am," said the professor, gravely.

"Of course he is," answered Messiter, with a wink.

"I never doubted that Mr. Crab was an ass."

"A wild one, Messiter," corrected the professor.

"Certainly, sir. Couldn't you oblige us with a bray?"

The unfortunate man put up his head, and made an extraordinary noise through his nose.

"That's it, sir, you can do it," said Messiter.

This quieted Mr. Crab, who smiled idiotically, and went on talking to himself.

It was as clear as noon-day that his brain was quite gone.

His intellect first began to get clouded when he took to drinking.

When he had talked about being "a Saxon—poof!" it was a sign that the disease was making slow but sure inroads.

Their underground adventure, the slaughter of Dugard, and the treatment of the blacks, coupled with the privation they endured before they met with Hadji Baba, had completely crushed what was a clear and brilliant intellect.

It was indeed sad to think of.

Both Dick and Messiter felt profoundly affected.

Still they could not shut their eyes to the fact that he had gone mad.

The Arabs quickly understood what was the matter with the professor, and they treated him with the simple kindness one extends to a child.

So long as he was not irritated he was not dangerous, and he committed no further act of violence during the journey to Ujiji.

At this place they anxiously awaited the arrival of Sampson Jack.

During their halt here they recovered their strength and were well treated by the Arabs.

Mr. Crab was regarded as an eccentric old fool, but no one insulted him or offered him any injury. He took to crawling about on all fours, eating grass and kicking out behind like a donkey.

As there was no such place as a lunatic asylum they could not confine him.

In the house in which he lived with the boys and Polly he insisted upon having a wooden trough or manger erected, and out of this to eat his bread and fish or whatever the meal might be.

When spoken to he could not converse upon any subject.

He had completely forgotten all he ever knew, and all he could say was that he was a wild ass and had lived before the flood, had been discovered four miles deep in the bosom of the earth, and been brought to the surface by Dick and his friends.

He was as confirmed a madman as ever was shut up in Bedlam.

"Am I not an antediluvian wild ass?" he would say.

"Of course you are, sir," Messiter would reply, taking hold of his coat, "and a lovely coat you've got."

"Let go my tail. Mind, I'm vicious," the poor professor would answer.

"Don't kick, sir."

"Don't trifle with me, then. Wild asses are dangerous things to play with, especially when they're antediluvian," the unhappy man would say, with a warning jerk of his leg.

At length the firing of shots and beating of drums announced the arrival of a caravan.

Dick rushed eagerly out of the town to meet it.

He hoped sincerely that it might be Sampson Jack, as he was wretchedly tired of being at Ujiji, and longed to get back to the coast.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A LIVELY SORT OF SKIPPER.

In England, where we have trains arriving from most distant parts at all hours of the day, we find a difficulty in understanding the delight and excitement which reigned in a little far off African town like Ujiji on the arrival of a caravan.

Such an arrival meant letters, news, provisions, trade, a greeting with old friends, feasting, talking and general gaiety.

Dick ran ahead of the merchants and natives, being the first to reach the caravan, which was a long one, and extended a good quarter of a mile.

Guns were being let off in front and in rear, and a great noise and clamor were going on.

A Pagazi, carrying the British flag, preceded a tall, handsome man riding on a donkey.

Dick instantly recognized Sampson Jack.

Running up gladly, he seized his hand and shook it warmly, the pressure being returned.

"Why, my lad," said Sampson Jack, "I expected to find you tired of Ujiji. What news?"

"Oh, a lot," said Dick; "we've had a stirring time of it."

"Did you see Livingstone?"

"Yes, he relieved us just after our Pagazi had deserted with all we had in the world."

"Just like him. He's a fine fellow. He'd give the shirt off his back."

"I never saw a man I admired and liked more," said Dick.

"Sorry that little woman ran away from us—little Polly—Mrs. Snarley, I mean. Alice took quite a liking to her," said Sampson Jack.

"She ran after us, and we have her with us now," said Dick.

"That's good news. How's Captain Vipond?"

"Dead."

"God bless me! And the professor?"

"Gone clean stark, staring mad," said Dick.

"Lord preserve us! Are the boys well?" said Sampson Jack, much astonished.

"Yes; Ted and Messiter are jolly. Ted is in love with Polly."

"Is he? Tell you what, Mr. Lighthead, I want a boy at Zanzibar in the office. If they like to engage themselves, Polly shall be my daughter's companion, and Ted shall go to the desk. I'll see after his advancement."

"That's kind of you," said Dick. "Polly, I don't think cares about going back to England. She has no friends there."

"Ted is too young to marry yet. He must wait a year or two," replied Sampson Jack.

"Certainly; I will tell them what you say, and I don't doubt they will be glad of the offer."

"Thought little Miss Polly was on to you," remarked the merchant.

"Perhaps," answered Dick. "But she knows I am engaged in England, and I should not much care about marrying a widow."

"No, no, of course not. Well, you tell them what I say. So Vipond's dead, eh? and the professor gone mad? Bless me!"

"Don't take any notice of him," replied Dick. "Mr. Crab is harmless if his back is not set up."

"What is the form of his insanity?"

"He thinks he's an antediluvian wild ass. By Jove, here he comes. He has heard us speak of you. We have been waiting here on the strength of your coming; but I don't think he will recognize you in the least," said Dick.

The professor approached—gaunt, wild, ragged.

Sometimes he walked flinging his arms about, at others he jerked himself along on his hands and knees, snatching at the grass with his mouth and munching it.

Sampson Jack got off his donkey, and said:

"How do, Mr. Crab?"

The professor rose up, and flew at him with his feet and hands, kicking him in the face and stomach.

"Oh!" cried Sampson Jack. "He's knocked me out of time. Pull him off. I don't like to hurt him."

Several Pagazi approached.

The professor kicked and hit and bit with his long, sharp teeth till they cried out with pain.

At last they ran away, saying in their own language that he had an evil spirit.

"Ha, ha!" cried the professor, setting on his hands.

"They will know now what an antediluvian wild ass can do."

"Humor him," said Dick, quietly.

Sampson Jack was rubbing his stomach, and he made a wide circuit to get past the professor.

"I don't like your wild ass," he exclaimed; "he kicks too hard. But what a sad thing for a man like he was to be what he is now."

Dick quite agreed with this remark, and they left the miserable man by himself.

Some time was spent in conversation with the Arabs, and when greetings were over, and the preliminaries of business arranged, Dick and Sampson Jack dined together.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Sampson Jack; "I'll take you and Messiter, Polly and Ted home with me."

"And the professor?"

"No. I won't touch wild asses. He must stop with the Arabs at Ujiji, and do the best he can. Madmen are not in my line."

"Very well," said Dick; "beggars mustn't be choosers. I suppose Mr. Crab will be better off here than in an asylum."

"What are your intentions?" asked Sampson Jack.

"Messiter and I want to ship to England."

"Well, that won't be difficult."

"I must tell you a secret," said Dick.

"What is it?"

"I think—but, mind you, I won't be sure—that Messiter is spooney on your daughter."

"What makes you think that?" asked Sampson Jack.

"He has let fall several things before me which led me to suppose so."

"Well, if Alice likes to have him, they may engage themselves, though your friend is not old enough yet to think of marrying."

"Have you any business he could look after for you in England for a year or two?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I have."

"Give him the job then."

"So I will," said Sampson Jack; "I can see no objection to that."

"Shall you stay long here?"

"A fortnight. The ivory stores are pretty good, and I shall be able to buy as largely as I like."

"It is settled, then, that we go back to the coast with you."

"All but Crab. I can't stand any more wild ass tricks," said Sampson Jack, rubbing his capacious stomach once more, as if he still felt the effects of the professor's kicks.

It did not matter to Dick whether the professor went with them or not, as Mr. Crab was not a friend of his.

They had met accidentally, and if the poor man was mad, he might as well stay with the Arabs as not.

Sampson Jack agreed to give Hadji Baba a quantity of cloth to look after the unfortunate professor.

The Arab promised that he should be treated kindly, want for nothing, and if he recovered they would send him to the coast by some friendly caravan.

In about three weeks the journey homeward commenced.

Professor Crab had lost all recollection of his former companions, and did not show any emotion at their departure.

We shall not dwell upon the incidents of the march to Bagamoyo.

Mirambo did not think fit to attack his old enemy Sampson Jack, and the party passed safely through the disturbed district east of Unyanyembi.

Here a brief halt was made.

Then the line was a straight one to the coast, and after experiencing the usual discomforts of travel in this anything but happy land, they reached Bagamoyo in fair time.

From thence they crossed to Zanzibar.

The Sultan and his Vizier had quite forgotten all about Polly and Dick.

They had heard that Polly was drowned, and that Dick had been killed by Mirambo in Africa.

Their experience with Dick, however, had taught them to be careful how they tried to kidnap English girls again.

In that particular instance they had caught a Tartar.

Ted readily accepted a situation in the large house at Zanzibar which was owned by the merchant prince, Sampson Jack.

Polly was sorry to leave Dick. She saw, though, that he did not and could not love her, while Ted was devoted to her.

In England she had no friends. Therefore, when Alice, the kind-hearted daughter of Sampson Jack, asked her to be her companion, and live with her until Ted was old enough and sufficiently well off to marry her, she forced back a sigh and consented. It had been the darling wish of her heart to marry Dick.

Like a sensible girl that she was, she saw this was an event impossible of accomplishment.

So she resigned herself to the inevitable. Alice was a charming girl, and with her she felt that she would occupy no menial position.

She would be treated more as a friend than a servant, and there was a promise of happiness with loving Ted in the future.

The party had dwindled down sadly now. Captain Vipond had perished in the wonderful valley below the earth, leaving no trace behind.

Not even a block of stone marked his grave. Harold Dugard had been the victim of the cruel and hideous dwarfs.

The professor was a hopeless lunatic, under the care of friendly Arabs.

Menzies had been killed by order of Mirambo, and now Ted and Polly were to remain at Zanzibar.

Dick and Messiter were still faithful companions, and they resolved to stick together and share the voyage home.

Though they did not anticipate any more trials, they could not make sure of peace, for they were a long way from England, and there was no knowing what might turn up before they got there.

Not wishing to trespass on Sampson Jack's kindness more than they could help, they determined to work their way home.

Sampson Jack wanted to buy them a passage. This they would not hear to.

"You have done enough for us," said Dick; "we're English, and without any offense to you, we prefer to be independent."

"I'm not going to find fault with your spirit," replied the good-natured merchant.

"We're not chickens," continued Dick; "we've been to sea and made two half voyages, which ought to count as one voyage, so we shan't ship as green hands."

"We're up to our work, anyhow," said Messiter.

"Well," said Sampson Jack, "go and pick up your berths. You won't be long. At this time of the year we have plenty of shipping."

It did not take the lads more than three weeks to find a ship.

The *Fox* bound for London, wanted two apprentices.

The captain, a man named Lake, engaged them at the salary of a pound a month for the run home.

It wasn't much, but they were glad to take it.

They immediately signed articles, not caring so much for money as for getting back to their friends and relations, who by this time must have fancied them dead.

Having settled the business, they had a glass at Charley's with Captain Lake, and hastened to Sampson Jack's house to report what they had done.

The last words of the Captain were:

"Mind you're on board to-night; we hoist anchor at daybreak."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Dick.

They ran back gladly to Sampson Jack's house, and found him lolling on a sofa, smoking a cigar, while Alice played and Polly sang.

Polly had recovered all her good looks, and was as happy as she used to be.

Mr. Snarley's name was never mentioned in her presence.

"Come in, lads," said Sampson Jack, as the boys stood at the entrance to the drawing-room.

"Don't let us disturb you, sir," answered Dick.

"Not a bit. Leave off, Alice, for a moment, there's a pet. What do you think, Lighthouse? Polly has been telling us what you kept a secret from me."

"What's that?"

"Your voyage to the world under-ground, down that river, you know."

"I did not say anything about it, because I did not expect you to believe it," replied Dick.

"No. I'll be hanged if I can stand a yarn like that," said Sampson Jack.

"It's as true as gospel all the same, but never mind, we won't talk about that, because it only riles me, sir, to hear a fellow say he don't believe what I know to be true. We'll talk about something else. Messiter and I have shipped."

"Already?"

"Yes. We were lucky enough to find a ship bound for London."

"What's her name?" asked Sampson Jack, raising up his huge form curiously.

"The *Fox*," replied Dick.

"Captain Lake?"

"Yes."

"Well, young gentlemen," said Sampson Jack, puffing out of his mouth the smoke of his cigar, "you've done a nice thing, I don't think."

"What's wrong?" asked Dick and Messiter, in a breath.

"Have you signed articles?"

"This morning."

"When do you sail?"

"At daybreak."

"Well, then," said Sampson Jack, "I suppose it can't be helped."

"What can't be helped?" asked Dick.

"I won't say anything," answered Sampson Jack.

"But look here. I'll give you a letter, which you can present to the consul at the first port you touch at if anything goes wrong. My name is known."

"What can go wrong?" asked Dick.

"I won't say anything."

"The captain, Mr. Lake, is a civil-spoken sort of fellow enough."

"Very likely."

"What's amiss then?"

"Never you mind, take my tip. I'll write the letter, and you may find it useful," said Sampson Jack.

He got up, and sitting down at a table, began to write a letter.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ON BOARD THE "FOX."

WHEN Sampson Jack had finished writing, he handed the letter to Dick, saying, "If you should want to cancel your articles before you get to England, give that to the British consul, and I don't think he will compel you to go on board again."

"Thank you," exclaimed Dick, putting the letter inside the lining of his cap.

"What is the first port you touch at?"

"Port Elizabeth, Algoa Bay."

"Most likely you will have enough of it by that time," answered the merchant, with a smile full of meaning.

"What do you know of Captain Lake, sir?" asked Dick.

"Never you mind. You've signed, and it's no use making you uncomfortable."

"Is he a beast?"

"He knows me well enough, and I don't think he would care to offend me," was the reply.

With this answer Dick was forced to be content.

He took an affectionate farewell of Polly and Ted, as did Messiter.

Polly was sorry to part with him, but she said that it was hopeless to dream of ever being anything nearer or dearer to Dick than a sister.

As for Ted, he wanted to go with the boys.

He couldn't bear to part with his young master, and begged hard to be allowed to accompany him.

But Dick knew what he would be studying the lad's interest by refusing his request.

With Sampson Jack he was sure of a good start in life. Polly would make him an excellent little wife in time, and there was a good prospect of the poor, ragged Brighton boy becoming one of the first merchants in Zanzibar.

Many a neglected boy has by perseverance and good conduct risen to fame and fortune under worse auspices. All an industrious, honest boy wants is a patron and a little luck.

Ted was in a fair way of getting on.

At length the leave-taking was over, and the boys went on board, each having in his pocket five sovereigns, the gift of the generous merchant Sampson Jack.

They fell into their places without any difficulty, and being well up to their work, gave no cause for complaint.

Captain Lake seemed a pleasant sort of man, and they fancied they had been deceived in the account they had received of his character.

The third mate, whose name was Barker, was very fond of listening to Dick's yarns.

After they had been out about a week, Dick, Messiter and Barker were lounging in the fore-castle.

The heat all day had been intense.

A cool breeze sprang up toward evening, which was a godsend.

"I've had the prickly heat all day," remarked Messiter.

"And I've been sweating like a bull," said Dick. "I seem to feel the heat more on board ship than I did in Africa."

"You've seen some life, youngster," observed Barker, who was a short, stout man of fifty, with iron-gray whiskers and grizzled hair.

"Ah," said Dick, "you should have been in a certain ship with me."

"Was she a sailing vessel?"

"No. Electric engines. Patent screw. Went under the bottom of the sea."

"Walker," said Barker, with a wink.

"It's a fact. I'll tell you all about her," replied Dick.

He related the story of their voyage with Harold Dugard.

The third mate of the *Fox* laughed with a sort of subdued chuckling noise.

"Very good, my lad," he said, "but it won't wash. I'm not a marine. I'm an able-bodied sailor, though I will say you can spin a yarn."

"What would you say to a voyage on a river, four miles below the surface of the earth. Shall I tell you that?" asked Dick.

"Go on, young un," answered Barker, "I'm listening."

Dick told him all the wonders of Lighthouse's Land and Messiter River.

"Very good indeed," exclaimed Barker, rolling his quid from one side of his mouth to the other.

"You don't believe me?"

"Go on," exclaimed Barker, whose eyes twinkled.

"I shan't tell you any more," said Dick, with an offended air.

"Look'ee here," said the third mate; "once I was a-standin' in the fo'castle, as I might be now, and up comes a flying fish. Well, I jumps on his back, and he flew with me all the way to Botany Bay and never stopped once. What do you say to that?"

"I should say it was a thundering crammer," answered Dick.

"And that's what I say to the entries in your log, my hearties, d'ye see?" said Barker.

He laughed heartily, which rather offended Dick, who, however, could not induce him to believe him.

"Here's the captain coming this way, I think," cried Messiter.

"Nice sort of kiddy, our captain," remarked Dick.

"Is he?" inquired Barker.

"So quiet, I mean."

"Wait till he breaks out."

"Breaks out?" repeated the boys in a breath.

"Yes; he has his fits; he'll be as quiet as a lamb for a time, and then—"

The third mate whistled.

"Have you sailed with him before?" asked Dick.

"Made the run out from London, and had a jolly good mind to cut at Zanzibar, only it was such a hole to hide in, and nothing but Africa to fall back on."

"What did he do for you?"

"You'll know a lot if you live long enough, my lad," said Barker. "But it's odds I shan't answer to my name when the roll's called after leaving Algoa Bay."

"Really?"

"Did you ever hear of the diamond fields?" said the third mate.

"Yes."

"Where people dig and find stones which make them independent for life?"

"I have," said Dick, again.

"That's my game, then. Keep it dark, and if you ain't altogether satisfied by the time we drop our anchor at Port Elizabeth, in Algoa Bay, perhaps we three can start partners."

"By jove!" said Dick, "that's a new idea." What do you say, Harry?"

"I've had enough moving about, and want to get home," answered Messiter.

"He's mammy's sick; it's bad when it's like that," said Barker, banteringly.

"No, I'm not, but I've gone through a lot," said Messiter.

The captain had now approached the party quite closely unperceived.

There was a wild look in his eyes, and his lower lip trembled a little.

The mate and the two boys touched their caps respectfully.

As Dick removed his, something fell out of it and dropped upon the deck.

"What's that, Lad?" asked Captain Lake, quickly.

For the moment Dick scarcely knew what it was.

He had forgotten the letter Sampson Jack had kindly given him in case his voyage should be an unpleasant one.

But everything had been so smooth and comfortable that he had not even the ghost of a thought about a British consul.

All at once he remembered what it was.

"A letter, sir," he said in some confusion.

"I can see that, you young fool," said Captain Lake, in a very different tone from that he usually employed.

"If you can see it, why did you ask?" said Dick.

He was sorry for making this impudent speech directly the word left his lips.

The captain raised his heavy fist and gave him a stinging box in the ears.

He was spinning along the deck until he caught hold of a rope.

Here he held on dizzy and stupid, his face tinged and his ears ringing.

"There's a clout on the head for you," said the captain, "and next time, perhaps, you'll know who you are talking to."

"Don't you do that again," was all that Dick could say slowly.

"I shall do it as often as I please. If my lads cheek me, I generally give them a toe-biter or a bruise on the head. You don't know Joe Lake yet."

"I know a jolly sight more than I want to," answered Dick.

He was beginning to recover himself a little now.

A blow from the open hand of a man like Captain Lake, who stood five feet eleven, and weighed twelve stone eight, was no joke to a growing boy of sixteen.

The eyes were a little watery still, and the ears rang, while the head felt woolly.

Still Dick saw his letter lying on the deck, and looked at it in a misty manner.

He had sense enough to know that it would not do to let Captain Lake get possession of it.

What its contents were he could only guess. But that their nature was not too complimentary to the captain he had little doubt.

Pulling himself together, he made a rush for the white-looking envelope.

"Would you?" cried the captain, seizing him by the ear, and holding him back.

Dick raised his knee, and caught the captain a blow in the pit of the stomach.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, letting go his hold. "The vicious wretch has kicked me in the wind. Hold him back, Mr. Barker."

The third mate walked to the side with his hands in his pockets, and began to whistle.

"Mr. Barker!" shouted the captain.

The third mate was apparently absorbed in the first bar of "Rule Britannia."

And he seemed to take an intense pleasure in watching the undulating motion of the waves.

"I ain't going to interfere," he muttered, as he left off whistling for a moment. "Not I, unless he begins to hurt the lad, and then—"

He clinched his brown hard-looking fists.

"Then, mutiny or no mutiny, my dander's up, and I mean sloggin," he concluded.

Meantime Dick had repossessed himself of the letter. The captain got his breath again.

Dick was very coolly stowing the letter away in the lining of his cap, where it had been concealed and forgotten ever since they left Zanzibar.

"Lighthouse," said Captain Lake.

"Sir," said Dick.

"Give me that letter."

"No sir, can't afford it at the price, said Dick.

"Mr. Barker!" cried the captain.

"Rule Britannia," whistled the third mate. "Brit—"

"Bar-ker! Devil take him! Bar-ar-ker!" roared the captain. "The man's as deaf as a beetle."

"—annia rules the waves, and Britons never shall be slaves," finished the third mate, with a shrill squeak at the end of the fourth bar.

Captain Lake had his telescope sticking out of his pea-jacket pocket.

With a reckless disregard for valuable property, he threw it at the third mate.

It caught him in the small of the back.

It took his wind, just as Dick's kick had taken the captain's.

"Oh!" ejaculated the third mate, with a gasp.

He was brought up, all standing.

Just like a ship in full sail that runs upon a sunken reef.

"Mr. Barker!" said the captain again.

"Oh! oh!" gasped the unfortunate man.

Captain Lake seized him by the arm and shook him.

"Will you attend to duty, sir?" he said.

"You hit me below the water line, sir," replied Barker.

"Bother your water line! Help me to get that letter from Lightheart. Am I to be defied on board my own ship by a young humbug like that?"

Dick advanced and touched his cap with mock politeness.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but neither you nor Mr. Baker, nor the whole ship's company, shall get that letter from me."

"What do you mean?" asked the captain, puzzled.

"Just what I say."

"But —"

"There is no 'but' in it," interrupted Dick; "that letter is my property. You have no possible right to it, and you shan't have it."

"Suppose I take it? You are not a match for a dozen."

"I know that. I'm not a match for a man like you, if it comes to that, and for that very reason you were a low coward to strike me."

"Stow your jaw!" cried the captain, angrily, "and give me the letter."

"I won't. You shall never have it."

"You can't stop me."

"Yes, I can," said Dick, boldly.

"How, young sharpshins?" asked the captain.

"By throwing my cap overboard. It's jolly old and greasy and bound to sink. The letter is in the lining. Keep off."

The captain had neared him a foot or two.

"Keep off, I say," continued Dick, "or in it goes, cap and all. If it can't be of use to me, it shan't gratify you."

The captain fell back, and his features softened into a hypocritical sort of smile.

"Well, well," he said, "we won't quarrel; forget the smack of the head I gave you."

"Forget it?" cried Dick, scornfully.

"Yes, say no more about it. Forget and forgive. I'm hasty at times."

"Never! never! never!" replied Dick, bitterly.

"What, you won't?"

"I never forget; I may forgive, but I like to take it out of a fellow first," said Dick.

"You can't take it out of me, you know."

"Can't I? Don't make too sure of that, Captain Lake, I'm a tough customer when you begin with me," said Dick, savagely and doggedly.

Captain Lake glanced at him.

Dick returned his look with interest, in a way that showed he was not afraid of him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LETTER.

"Come, come," said Captain Lake, at length, "you are not a stubborn and unforgiving lad; I know you are not."

"Never mind what I am; I like fair play," answered Dick.

"Of course you do. We all do. But duty and discipline must be maintained on board ship."

"I've sailed before now; and I've seen a ship much bigger than this worked with fewer hands, and a good deal better. Clouting won't do it."

"Never mind. Come into my cabin, and take a glass of wine."

The offer was made in a friendly way, and a good-tempered look seemed to come over the captain's face again.

Dick was, for the time, thrown off his guard just at that moment.

The third mate began to whistle again.

"Will you come into my parlor?" said the spider to the fly.

That was the air he selected this time.

Dick felt that it was intended as a friendly warning.

"Confound it, Mr. Barker," cried the captain, all his good humor, which had been momentarily put on, vanishing. "I wish you would not take the damnable liberty of whistling when I'm on deck."

"Beg pardon, sir. Shan't occur again. Didn't know it was an offense on board a merchant vessel," said the third mate.

"Now, lad, come on," said Captain Lake, turning to Dick.

But Dick looked haughtily at him.

"What do you take me for?" he said.

"Take you for? Why, for a well-disposed sort of boy."

"Do you think I'm going to drink at the expense of a man who has hit me as you have? Not much."

Dick spoke angrily, and his eyes flashed.

"Bravo," whispered Messiter. "Let him have it. Don't funk him, Dick. I'll stick by you."

Dick gave him a thankful look, and folding his arms, boldly confronted the captain of the *Fox*.

"Please yourself," answered the captain; "maybe you won't have another chance."

He turned round, and walked quickly away aft.

Messiter and Barker congratulated Dick upon having got off so well, though the third mate added:—

"He's so jolly artful that you never know when to have him. He'll be up to some dodge directly."

Scarcely had he spoken when four sailors and the first mate came up to them. Pushing Messiter on one side,

and getting between Mr. Barker and Dick, they seized the latter.

The first mate snatched off his cap.

Rapidly he searched the lining, found the letter, and put it in his pocket.

"Hold him tight, my lads," said the mate; "it's the captain's orders. If he attempts to come aft for half an hour let him have the taste of a rope's end. Mr. Barker, you will see that this boy is not troublesome."

Barker nodded, and growled out a surly "Aye, aye."

Tossing the now useless cap to Dick, who was fuming and fretting with rage, the first mate strode away with the letter.

"Let go," said Dick; "I shan't make a noise."

The sailors took their hands off him, and he sat down on a coil of rope.

"How do you feel now?" asked Barker.

"He diddled me that journey," answered Dick.

"Is there anything bad in the letter?"

"Blest if I know. He won't like it, I expect, and yet I can't tell. It was to do me good."

"Tell us all you know about it," said Barker.

"Willingly."

Dick told him frankly the history of the letter.

"Oh!" exclaimed Barker, "if I had been you I wouldn't have made any fuss about it. What was there to be afraid of?"

Dick was about to reply, when the captain was again seen.

This time he was coming rapidly towards them.

"Ah!" he cried, white with rage, "go to the British consul, will you? I'll give you something to go for, you artful young swab."

"Perhaps you will be sorry if you do, Captain Lake," answered Dick, mildly.

"How dare you get a Zanzibar merchant to write a letter like this, and try to ruin me?"

"I don't know what is inside."

"He says I am suspected of having committed murder on the high seas," shouted the captain.

"You're quite capable of it."

"And of having scuttled a ship."

"Rather in your line, I should say," replied Dick, with provoking coolness.

I'll make him prove them, and he shall pay for this libel, and as for you, I'll have an example made of you."

The officers and crew, hearing the altercation, crowded round to see what was going on.

They knew the irascible temper of Captain Lake too well to interfere.

Many regarded Dick with pitying looks.

Several would have liked to defend him, but they dared not do so.

The *Fox* was running along before a sluggish breeze at about four and a half knots.

In her wake the blue sea bubbled and danced, sparkling in the golden sunshine.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DICK IS MADE AN EXAMPLE OF.

"Mr. Symons," said the captain.

"Sir," replied the first mate.

"Seize that boy and hold him fast."

Symons took hold of Dick by the collar, and kept him at arm's length in a vice-like grip.

Struggling in the hands of such a powerful man was of no use.

Captain Lake tore the letter into a dozen pieces, and cast them over the ship's side.

They were tossed about by the wind until they settled lazily on the waves, and were soon left behind.

"There is your precious letter," he said; "you won't show that to any consul, I'll bet a month's pay."

"What shall I do with him, sir?" asked Symons.

"Put him in an empty hen-coop," answered the captain.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I'll show him how we treat unruly boys on board the *Fox*. We have come to something if a bad example is to be set a whole ship's company by a son of a sea cook like that."

"I warn you," said Dick, "that you are acting illegally."

"We'll chance that, my lad; bundle him in, Mr. Symons, neck and crop," answered the captain.

The first mate doubled Dick up as if he had been a hammock, and squeezed him into a large hen-coop.

Then he shut the wicker door and made it fast with a cord.

"Tie a rope to it, taut," continued Captain Lake.

This was done.

"Make fast the other end and pitch him overboard. I'll teach him to saucer me."

The first mate grasped the coop and cast it over the ship's side.

It sunk below the waves.

All this was done so rapidly that Dick had scarcely time to realize his position.

He found himself half drowned and choking in the salt water, unable to swim for his life, utterly powerless to do anything to extricate himself from the terrible position in which he was placed.

At length he came to the surface.

Seizing the bars with his hands, he gasped for breath.

The sea broke over him, and it was with difficulty that he managed to breathe.

Did the captain want to drown him like a rat in a drain?

It looked very much like it.

He had not expected such barbarous treatment, and wished that Sampson Jack had not written the unfortunate letter for him.

It was kindly meant.

But the result had been very different from that which the writer contemplated.

"Pay out the slack," said the captain.

The whole length of the rope was paid out, and Dick

floated fully a hundred and fifty feet in the boiling seething wake of the vessel.

Suddenly the coop was brought up with a jerk.

The rope was taut now.

Every now and then the coop was dragged under, and Dick had to keep his mouth shut and hold his breath for fear of being suffocated.

When the top of the coop jumped up over the waves he hastily took in a fresh supply of air.

So it went on; now he was under water, now above.

It was like a cork bobbing up and down in an eddy or whirlpool.

Never before had he experienced anything similar to it.

Certainly the captain had, with devilish ingenuity, invented a novel and striking mode of punishing a refractory hand.

Every moment Dick drew his breath with more difficulty.

The sensation he experienced was horrible.

How long was his punishment to continue, and how long could he bear it?

Douse, douse, gasp, splutter; douse, douse again, and then another desperate gasping at the precious air.

All at once his senses left him.

A black curtain seemed to fall in front of his eyes. There was a singing in his ears, then all was dark.

In a moment he felt a sense of relief, the oppression passed away, and the black night gave place to brilliant day.

He seemed to be a child again, wandering in grassy meadows, plucking the gaudy buttercups and the modest daisies.

This may seem strange, but it is an exact description given by a man who was taken out of the water insensible, and who afterwards recovered.

It goes to prove that drowning is not the painful death some imagine it to be.

When Dick came to himself, he was in his own bunk, with Messiter standing beside him.

Close by was Mr. Barker.

He was too weak and ill to speak for a time, and his eyes closed again.

Still he could hear what was said.

"If he dies," said Mr. Barker, "I'll take care the captain is tried for his life."

"I think the brute got funky at last," answered Messiter.

"Yes, when he saw the poor fellow all huddled up at the bottom of the cage, he soon gave the order to haul in."

"Do you think he'll die, sir?" asked Messiter.

"I hope not. What little experience I have had in cases of drowning, leads me to think there is a chance."

"At any rate we have done all we can."

"How long is it since we have had him on board?"

"Nearly two hours," replied Mr. Barker.

"Shall I give him some more brandy? Oh, Mr. Barker, he must not die. We are such old friends, and it will be so sad, after all we have gone through, too."

The tears came into Messiter's eyes.

"God is good," replied the third mate. "I'm a rough sort of fellow, but I believe in a hearty prayer, and I've sent more than one up aloft for him."

Dick contrived to move his arm, and touch Messiter with it.

"He's alive; look, he moves," cried Messiter delighted.

"Keep quiet. Don't excite him. Try him with a drop more brandy. I'll go on deck and report. The men are anxious about him," replied Barker.

In a short time it was known all over the ship that Dick was not going to die.

Everybody was pleased.

It was some days, however, before Dick was able to come on deck and resume his duty.

The captain did not speak to him, but on the other hand he did not ill-treat him.

In a short time he expected to cast anchor in Algoa Bay.

He did not want any complaints made, or any fuss created before the authorities.

There was no doubt he had nearly killed the lad, and he would have at least been heavily fined at Port Elizabeth for his cruelty.

At length the wished-for haven was reached.

Messiter and Barker got leave to go ashore, but Dick was not so fortunate.

Leave was steadily refused him.

Under the circumstances it was necessary to have recourse to cunning.

Early in the morning he hid himself in the bows of the boat, and was covered by Messiter with some old coats and a tarpaulin.

Here he lay till the crew were ready to start.

The boat was lowered, Messiter, Barker, and others got in, and casting her off, they started for the shore.

No one had any idea that Dick was with the party.

The morning was one of complete calm, which was lucky, as there is always a tremendous surf running, and there are no docks or landing places.

Port Elizabeth is not an inviting town.

It is treeless and destitute of shade, dry, hot, and dusty, while the air has a sleepy smell, the trade consisting entirely of wool.

When the boat's nose grated on the sand, Dick sprang out like a harlequin, and cut a caper on the beach.

Mr. Symons, the first mate, who was one of the liberty men, regarded him with astonishment.

"How the dickens did you get here, youngster?" he asked.

"Same way as you did," replied Dick.

"Come back again. It's as much as my berth's worth to let you come ashore in disobedience of the captain's orders."

Dick did another war dance and snapped his fingers.

"What do I care for you or the skipper either?" he exclaimed.

"But, I say —"

"Shut up," interrupted Dick. "I'll make it hot for both of you if you don't watch it."

"Seize him, my men," cried Symons; "the skipper

will give a five-pound note to the man who brings him back again."

"That man isn't pupped yet," said Dick, running up some steps, followed by Barker and Messiter.

It was in vain that the first mate tried to induce the men to capture Dick.

They liked the lad and hated the officers of the *Fox*, with the exception of Mr. Barker.

Being British sailors and blunt, honest, hearty fellows, they would not range themselves on the side of tyranny.

"Catch him yourself if you want him," blunted out an old salt.

"Aye, aye," shouted the others, "Bob's right. It ain't no business of our'n."

So the three men strutted unmolested into the town, and walked into a place of refreshment to make some inquiries.

They sat down and ordered a bottle of Cape wine which, to those unaccustomed to it, seems to be a mixture of white vinegar and paraffin.

"I pulled that off all right," remarked Dick, alluding to his escape.

"And I'll bet you were never so glad to get out of a ship in your life," said Barker.

"But one. You forget the strange vessel."

"Stow that. I can't swallow your strange yarns," replied Barker, with a smile. "Let's talk business. Neither of you are going back."

"Not if I know it," replied Dick, "Captain Lake might take it into his head to keel-haul us, or invent some amusement worse than hen-cooping."

"I'm bound for the diamond fields myself, and we'll all go together, if you're agreeable."

Both boys said they were.

"Right," continued Barker. "How about the cash? I've got thirty quid. What's your bank?"

Dick and Messiter produced the two five-pound notes which Sampson Jack had given them.

"That'll make forty. Quite enough to start on. Suppose you make me banker, and we'll go partners, working and sharing together."

"I'm on," said Dick.

"So am I," said Messiter, "though it seems to me we have the best of it, as you find more capital than we do."

"Never mind that. You're young and won't shirk hard work. Now, it's no use stopping here. You don't want any sprees at Port Elizabeth. Let's go on the road at once."

"To-day?"

"Why not. If we can find a wagon going, we'll take a passage," said Barker.

The boys placed themselves entirely in the hands of the late third mate of the *Fox*.

Inquiries were made, and they found that at mid-day a train of six wagons would "inspan," or start for the diamond fields that day.

The price demanded for a passage was five pounds, which Barker paid.

All were glad to get away without waiting.

It is a great offense in mercantile places to run from a ship when she touches at a port.

It leaves her short-handed, and is a breach of contract.

Magistrates are often ship-owners, and if our party had been caught and brought before the bench, they would have been sent back to the *Fox*, much to Captain Lake's delight.

He would have had his revenge on them during the voyage round the Cape and home.

There were no beds in the wagons, which were drawn by a span, or team, of sixteen large oxen.

The boys had to lie or sprawl on the top of a lot of barrels, hidden by a coarse tarpaulin.

But Barker bought three colored blankets.

One for each of them.

These kept off the cold night air and the dews.

After their African travels, the lads were at home anywhere with a blanket and a gun.

The drivers smacked their long, cruel-looking whips, and the oxen started, drawing the heavy wagon after them.

"We're off," cried Dick, full of spirits again. "Hurrah for the diamond fields!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Messiter.

Even the stolid Barker waved his newly bought felt hat.

Visions of boundless wealth floated before their excited imagination.

Already Dick saw himself the possessor of a diamond as big as a turkey's egg.

Messiter, who was not so ambitious, contented his vision with one the size of a hen's egg.

The diamond fever had seized upon them.

They fancied they had only to scratch the surface of the earth to pick up fabulous riches.

In time they found the difference between romance and reality.

CHAPTER XXXV.

OFF TO THE DIAMOND FIELDS.

AWAY went the wagons, the drivers uttering shouts and curses, and flourishing thin, long shambocks, or whips, made of rhinoceros hide.

Oxen take a lot of driving.

The motion of the "cow chariot," as Dick called it, was not pleasant.

It was a succession of jolts, mingled with a jerk up and a shoot forward, followed by a bump down.

When the dusty, sandy town had been cleared, the boys got up and showed themselves.

There was no longer any fear of being seen by their shipmates, and hauled back to slavery and persecution on board the *Fox*.

Mr. Barker had bought a few things "on the cheap," before starting, things which he considered necessities, so that when a halt was made, they could cook their own

bit of meat in their own "billy" or kettle, like the rest of the travelers.

There were a good number of adventurers crowding up to the fields.

Just then diamond hunting was in full swing.

Hundreds came from all parts to participate in the sparkling harvest.

At first the road ran through hills, with a gradual ascent.

Afterwards vast, bleak plains spread themselves out, without a tree or house to relieve the monotony of the blank, dreary landscape.

This part of Africa was very different from the wild, rich region that Dick had so lately traversed.

Occasionally a few herds of springboks were seen, but snakes and wild beasts were absent.

Flocks of goats and sheep were plentiful, tended by savage-looking men clad in skins.

At times they reached the house of a boer, or Dutch farmer, where they purchased milk, butter, eggs and vegetables.

All were glad when the camp was reached.

There were several to choose from, but the one they selected, from hearing good accounts of it, was called Gong Gong.

A large town of wood and canvas had sprung up in a few months on the bank of the river.

American bowling saloons, billiard-rooms and bars had multiplied largely.

Everything was to be had at a price, but as a rule things were pretty dearly paid for.

The appearance of the working grounds where the "claims" were was not inviting.

Great holes yawned in the earth twenty feet down, where men were working like moles.

It seemed like a gigantic rabbit warren, full of burrows.

The soil when dug up was brought to the surface either by a ladder or by a rope in baskets.

Then it was washed and sorted.

During the latter operation the diamonds, if there were any in the haul, were found.

But sometimes two men had been known to work a claim for six months and not find a diamond big enough to pay their expenses.

Like everything in this world, diamond finding was more a matter of luck than industry.

Dressed in rough pea-jackets, top boots, and felt hats, made to keep off the sun, the boys with Barker selected a spot to camp.

They put up a tent, dug a trench round it to let off the rain, and put inside what few things they could call themselves masters of.

They had started with forty pounds; when they arrived at Gong Gong, all they had left was fifteen.

"While you and Messiter cook the grub," said Dick to Mr. Barker, "I'll go take a stroll round and see what Gong Gong's like."

They generally allowed Dick to have his own way, and made no objection to what any one else would have called a cool proposition.

So he walked off with his hands in his pockets, through the strange town, which, as work was almost over, swarmed with white men and negroes, the latter doing the hard work at good wages.

The absence of women in the camp made it look still more strange.

After walking some distance Dick stopped in front of a bar before which a number of men were standing drinking.

Behind it a dapper, short-haired little Frenchman, active as a monkey, was frisking about.

In front of the bar was badly painted, on a board—

"PIERRE BOURGAIN'S BAR."

"Here find themselves the spirits and the wines, as well the beers of all sorts, at ze low price. Come in for whiskey, brandies, gins, sailor's rums, Yankee drinks, as well as teas, coffees, for all find themselves here of ze best."

"N. B.—DIAMONDS DRUNK OUT."

This last intimation meant that a man who found a diamond could leave it with Bourgain, after settling its price, and have drinks to its value.

He could really "drink it out!"

A gentlemanly, but dissipated-looking man, of middle height, who was sitting on the top of a barrel, espied Dick looking in at the liquor shop.

"Hullo!" he said, "here's another victim to the greed for gold."

All turned round to look at the new face.

"What is it, baron?" asked one.

"A schoolboy, I'll bet, run away from his Latin grammar and English history, thinking he's another Sinbad, to pick up diamonds in a valley."

"You're wrong for a dollar," said Dick, stepping up with a smile on his lips.

"No, I'm never wrong; can't admit that," said the man who was called Baron.

"Take the bet, then, said Dick. "Are you on?"

"You look a smart boy, and I don't want to be fixed up."

"Don't you talk about strangers again, then," said Dick, "unless you want to have a bunch of fives on your smeller, which is red enough without any painting."

There was a loud laugh at this.

"Ah, ze poor baron," cried the barkeeper. "What for he get chaff from ze boy?"

"I believe he's older than he looks," said the baron, emptying his glass.

"I'll tell you what I am," said Dick. "I'm a sailor, and I've run from my ship. You haven't done me much harm. Stand a liquor, and I'll forgive you."

"Ah! begorra," said the little Frenchman. "That's what I call a very sensible young mans."

"What will your honor be afther taking?" asked the Frenchman's assistant, an Irish boy, whose nose just came over the bar.

"Let him take his hook," remarked the baron, surlily.

"I shan't stand him anything."

"Perhaps you're too poor," observed Dick.

"I've got as good a claim as there is in Gong Gong," was the indignant answer.

"And I'll lay a sovereign you're too drunk to work it as a rule," rejoined Dick.

Another loud laugh broke out at this retort.

"He can read you like a book, baron," said one of his friends.

"All right, old son. I can part or fight," said Dick.

He turned round and faced M. Bourgain.

The man who was called "the baron" was supposed to be the son of an English nobleman.

The rough fellows with whom he associated called him sometimes "Baron," at others "My lord."

He was very lucky.

He worked generally one day a week in his claim, found enough to live upon until he got sober, and had to work again.

His usual condition was one of drunkenness.

But as he was very generous, would stand drinks to the crowd on the slightest provocation, and was gentlemanly in his manner as a rule, the diggers liked him.

He was usually the soul of the group drinking at the bar he favored with his presence.

"M. Bourgain," said Dick, politely.

"Monsieur," replied the bar keeper.

"Il me faut quelque chose a boire," cried Dick.

"Oh!" cried Bourgain, dancing with joy, "he spoke my own language like one Frenchman. He is the true gentleman. What will you please to take, sir?" he added, in French.

"Give me a cocktail," answered Dick.

A tall, roughly-dressed man pushed his way up to Dick.

"Let him alone, Champagne Charley," said one standing by.

"I shan't," he answered.

"Be quiet; the lad's right enough, and he's a stranger, too."

"What's that to me?"

"The baron was on to him first."

"Dry up," said Champagne Charley, who touched Dick on the shoulder.

"What's your game?" asked Dick.

"You said something about fighting, didn't you?" was the answer.

"Yes, I did."

"Well, I guess the baron can't fight, but I can. If you're disposed that way, I can oblige you."

"Thank you," said Dick, coolly, "don't bustle me; I've ordered a drink; let's talk the matter over."

"It don't want talking."

M. Bourgain handed Dick the glass containing the cocktail.

Champagne Charley seized it, and with studied and proking insolence, threw its contents in Dick's face.

Dick's blood was up in a moment.

It was not much use his trying to fight a man of thirty, nearly six feet high.

He saw that.

So he quietly took up a glass that stood on the counter.

Throwing it at the man, he struck him over the left eye.

He was covered with blood, and breathed heavily.

"Bravo, youngster," said more than one. "That's law at the digging. If you haven't got a shooter, smash 'em up with glass."

"Does anybody else want to come on?" asked Dick.

"Perhaps you, gentlemen, will let me alone in future," continued Dick. "I don't want to fight, but I'm not going to be bully-ragged."

Some friends of Champagne Charley's took him to his tent.

Here they bathed his wound, which was not serious, and put him to bed.

"I'll have another drink," said Dick. "I took the other outside."

He was supplied with a cocktail, which he drank in peace.

Champagne Charley was a well-known bully, and no one seemed sorry for him.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Dick.

He walked out of the bar into the cool evening air, and flattered himself he had got out of the scrape very well.

Throwing glasses at people was not his usual form, but he had acted in self-defense after a gross insult, and on the impulse of the moment.

He hadn't gone far before the baron came after him.

"Look here, my lad," said the baron.

"What is it?" asked Dick, coldly.

"I like you; let's be friends."

"What's the good?"

"It will be good for both of us."

"How? I don't see the pull on my side."

"Look here," answered the baron; "I've got a claim, but I don't stick to it; my luck's in, and there are lots who would like to join me."

"Well?"

"I'll take you in partners. Come and work with me. You shall have half my luck. I can't work, I get too drunk."

Dick smiled.

"That's a neat confession to make," he said.

"I can't help it; work is not in my line. I don't care about employing niggers; they rob me, and I've never been accustomed to work myself."

"Who are you?"

"Perhaps you'll know some day," answered the baron, mysteriously. "Join me; we shall make a fortune."

Dick reflected.

The offer was a good one.

Messiter and Barker could take a claim and work it by themselves.

They would not miss him.

If he was successful he could always go to them.

"I'm on," he said, after a pause; "we will have no settled bargain, I'll only say this, for one month we're partners, and if I don't like it, I shall slope."

"Done with you. Come and have another drink," answered the baron shaking his hand.

They went back to the bar together.

The baron's "drink" meant a dozen, for he never put a limit to his potations.

It was quite late when, after making an appointment with his new friend for the morning, Dick staggered back to his tent.

The baron had gone to sleep under the bar, at which he was so well known that M. Bourgain merely threw a rug over him and left him to sleep off the effects of the brandy.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DICK'S FIRST DIAMOND.

MR. BARKER and Messiter were sitting up for Dick.

He had had no dinner.

They were wondering what could have become of him when he appeared in the doorway.

There was a happy smile about his face, and he seemed rather unsteady.

"Dick's tight," said Messiter. "What a lark!"

"Come in," said Mr. Barker.

"I'm half cocked," said Dick; "been with the baron, you know, and I've smashed up Champagne Charley."

"Who's he?" asked Mr. Barker.

"Tell you to-morrow. Where's my grub? I've coped the brewer."

"I say, Dick, you're going it," said Messiter, as he placed some mutton stew on a stool before him.

Dick said nothing until he had satisfied his hunger.

Then he wrapped himself up in his blanket, threw himself on the ground, and muttered, "Think shall go to sleep now. Good night, you f'flows."

He was soon snoring loudly.

The next day the bright sun shining into the tent woke the boys, who were soon up.

Dick had a bad headache, and said he felt very much "like soda and brandy."

"I shall go to Bourgain's bar," he cried, "and have a pick-me-up. I don't know how it was exactly last night, but I kicked over the traces."

"Mr. Barker is going to look after a claim," said Messiter.

"Is he?"

"Yes, he says he must not lose time. Will you come?"

"I've got one," replied Dick; "fact is I've palled up with a fellow. Sorry to cut you, Harry, but if I have any luck and it's a good thing I'll put you in it."

Messiter was a little put out at hearing this.

"That's rather shabby, isn't it?" he said. "We agreed to work together."

"One must look out for himself."

"You will come back to us, like the prodigal son."

"Don't know so much about that. I mean business," answered Dick, shaking his head gravely; "my game is to make money, and I mean to try."

"So do we."

"After all, Harry," continued Dick, "we shall be together; we are in the same tent, and mess here every day. Good morning; I'm off to work."

Messiter started after him as he left the tent, and thought he had got into a bad set.

But Dick knew what he was about.

Mr. Barker and Messiter would have to open the ground and make a hole, which would take them some time.

Perhaps after a month's digging and washing they would not find a diamond big enough to pay expenses.

Then, if he had any luck, he meant to come to their assistance, and show them that his heart was in the right place.

He went straight to Bourgain's bar, where he found the baron indulging in his morning's draught.

"Ah," answered the baron, "you're the man for my money."

"Let's have a drink," said Dick.

"Not a drop if I know it," was the answer.

"But you are drinking!"

"That's different. I'm a worthless fellow. You are young, and have your way to make in the world. Drink when your work's done—not before. It is that that ruins half the men."

Dick stared at him with astonishment.

"Perhaps you're right," he answered. "Let's have some coffee, M. Bourgain."

"That's better," said the baron. "You'll do, if you act as I tell you. Now listen to me. I haven't touched my claim for a fortnight, since I found a seven-carat diamond."

"How much a carat are diamonds worth?" asked Dick.

"We've got what we call the running carat system. All are sold by carat, and they fetch three pounds a carat."

"What shall I have to do?"

"I've engaged a boy to help you—that's a nigger, you know. We call all the blacks boys. He'll dig out the stuff, and you wash it, and bring it to me near the river, and I'll sort it."

"All right. I see," replied Dick.

"If you like to take a turn with the spade and pick, the nigger will wash."

"Very well," said Dick, sipping his coffee, "I'll just drink this, and if you'll show me the claim, I will start."

"Right you are, my hearty. I see I was not mistaken in you," said the baron. "Don't you get discouraged if you don't find anything for a week. It's all luck."

Dick was conducted to the deep hole at the mouth of which the native servant was waiting.

"I'll have the first go down," said Dick; "give us hold of the pick."

"That's your sort," answered the baron, encouragingly.

"I haven't traveled in a cow cart 445 miles, and been forty days doing it from Port Elizabeth to Gong-Gong for nothing," answered Dick, bravely.

He was given the necessary tools, received some further directions, and descended into the claim, which had not as yet been worked much below the top-lying sand

and gravel, which had to be got out before the diamonds—if there were any—could be found.

The baron went back to the bar to spend a few hours over his beloved bottles, before he was summoned to the table to sort the drift which came out of the washing cradle.

Dick had stripped to his shirt.

He saw that he was to have all the hard work, but then it was something to have a good start.

The baron was not to pay him anything for his services.

He had agreed to go in for half profits.

This was much better if he could find anything, and it acted as a stimulus to exertion.

As he picked and dug in the dark, mine-like shaft, he looked eagerly at the dry soil for something sparkling.

Rough though an uncut diamond is when first dug out, there is something about it which prevents a man from mistaking it for an ordinary stone.

After working about an hour, and sending up a couple of baskets of dirt, he saw a bright stone, and put it in his pocket.

He intended to show it to the baron when he got up again.

It happened that Champagne Charley, who was too ill to work that day, was walking about with his head bandaged up.

He reached the baron's claim, and was surprised to see work going on.

"Who's that down in the hole?" he asked of a bystander.

"Some youngster the baron's put on," was the reply.

"Not the one as propped me with the glass last night?"

"I think it is."

A dark frown stole over Champagne Charley's face.

He peered down into the depths of the shaft.

Just at this time Dick put the big stone in his pocket, not thinking he was observed.

"Artful young begger," remarked Champagne Charley.

"He's found a sparkler, and he's welling it."

He longed for his revenge upon Dick, and strolling on, reflected how he could best obtain it.

The blow he had received from the glass would leave a scar on his face for life.

In Bourgain's bar he found the baron.

"Morning, my lord," he exclaimed. "Got a new hand on your claim, I see."

"Was it necessary to ask your permission?" replied the baron.

"Oh, no. It's got nothing to do with me."

"Perhaps you'll mind your own business, then."

"Well, I was going to tell you what I'd heard about the young kiddy," said Charley.

"A pack of lies, no doubt. You don't love him, because of the way he smashed you up last night."

"Very likely that was his own fault. If a fellow will get up a row, he must expect a fall sometimes," said Charley, trying to look good-humored and unconcerned.

"What have you heard?" asked the baron, curiously, after a pause.

"Oh, it don't matter to me. I don't want to let out."

"Out with it, man."

"Well," said Charley, with apparent reluctance, "I've been told by the pals he came up to the fields with that he's a thief and ain't been long out of prison."

"Go on."

"It's true. He was at New Rush before he came here, and had to cut because he stole things from his employer. They'd have had his life if he hadn't footed it quick."

This scandalous invention had the desired effect upon the baron.

He looked grave.

"I didn't think it of him," he said. His face looked honest enough.

"Ah, you're a mug; any one can have you," said Champagne Charley, pityingly.

"He'll be up soon to help me sort. I'll talk to him. Have a drink?"

"Don't mind if I do. Here's fortune."

"Same to you."

They clinked their glasses together, and then walked down to the river, where they found Dick and the native just finishing washing the last lot of dirt in the cradle.

"Bring it along," said the baron, sitting down on a camp stool before a table.

In his hand he held a knife, with which he was going to rake over the dirt.

If there was a diamond in it, his sharp eye would not fail to detect it.

Box full after box full was set out. Not the ghost of a diamond was to be seen.

With a sigh of disgust, the baron got up from his seat. Champagne Charley whispered in the baron's ear:

"Don't you trust him. Ask him what he has got in his pocket."

The baron nodded his head.

He had been set against Dick by the lies his enemy had told him a little while before.

"Bad luck, my lad," he exclaimed aloud, "you've unearthed nothing as yet."

"Can't help it; try again, as the man said when he jumped out of the window to commit suicide and only tumbled into a mud cart," said Dick.

"Have you found nothing?"

"No; not a thing."

In the excitement of the moment and the novelty of the situation, he had quite forgot the shining stone he had picked up and put in his pocket.

"Nothing?" asked the baron again.

"No, I tell you," said Dick, savagely. "Are you deaf?"

"What have you got in your pocket?"

Dick turned pale.

He remembered the stone now, and seeing the malicious glancing eye of Champagne Charley fixed upon him, he guessed that something unpleasant was going to happen.

"I—I picked up a stone, and meant to show it you," he said.

"Meant to?"

"Yes, I forgot it just for the moment."

"Hand it out," said the baron, impatiently.

Dick gave him the large stone which he had picked up in the semi-darkness of the shaft.

The baron gave one look at it.

He uttered a loud shout.

"By gad, boy, you're no fool," he said, his lips quivering with excitement.

"What ha' yer got?" asked Champagne Charley, curiously.

"Stand off!" replied the baron; "I've got a shooter in my hand. I ain't particular."

"But what's up?"

"Why, this is a diamond, and the biggest find we've have had at Gong-Gong yet."

"The devil it is!"

Dick listened wonderingly.

Was it possible that the dirty-looking stone could be a precious diamond?

"It is a fortune. I never such a beauty. Hurrah!" cried the baron, throwing up his hat.

But the next moment he fixed his eyes sternly upon Dick.

"Be off, you young thief," he exclaimed. "You'd have robbed me, would you?"

Dick gazed at him astonished, while the blood rushed tingling up to his face.

He had been called a thief.

What did it mean?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CHAMPAGNE CHARLEY GETS A JOB.

ATTER staring at his late friend a moment, Dick recovered himself.

"Perhaps," he said, "you will be good enough to explain your meaning."

"It's clear enough," returned the baron.

"What is?"

"Why you sneaked the diamond, and meant to bolt with it."

"I did," exclaimed Dick.

"Yes. I shouldn't have thought it of you, but I've heard your character."

"Who from?"

"This fellow," said the baron, pointing to Champagne Charley.

"Don't drag me into it. What I said was private," exclaimed Charley, whose damaged and bound-up head reminded him that it was not safe to provoke Dick too far.

"What did he say of me," asked Dick, quietly.

"You know as well as I do. Weren't you kicked out of your old diggings for thieving?"

"Go on," said Dick, with a smile.

"That's about all. I don't want to discuss the matter with you. If you'd gone straight, I'd have given you a half share in this diamond, as I promised. Now I don't feel under any obligation to do so. You robbed me, and I treat you only as a dishonest servant, whom I dismiss on the spot."

"You are acting very unfairly and foolishly," answered Dick. "In the first place, you shouldn't listen to a ruffian like that, who has his knife into me, because I smashed him up last night. Secondly, I wasn't sure about the stone, and put it in my pocket to show you."

"Why didn't you show it in the first thing?"

"I forgot it."

Champagne Charley burst into a hoarse laugh.

"Of course," he said; "we know all about that. It's easy to forget."

"I'll square accounts with you afterward, my beauty," said Dick.

"Don't you touch me no more," cried Charley, stepping back a pace. "You behaved cowardly enough last night. Going in with glass, instead of fighting fair with fists."

"What else could I do? You set on me first, and you're as big again and twice as ugly as I am."

"Every one said it wasn't square," cried Charley, "so keep off. I've got a four shooter in my pocket, and if you offer to touch me, I'll break one of your legs with a bullet."

Dick gave him a contemptuous glance.

"Stroll on, youngster," said the baron. "It's all up the Baltic with us."

"I'm sorry for that," said Dick, "because I began to like you, and hoped we might have done business together."

"So we might if——"

"If," said Dick, taking him up, "you hadn't listened to the lies of a villain like that. I should have thought of the stone sooner or later, and given it up to you. I was anxious about the starting, it being so new to me."

Again Champagne Charley gave utterance to an offensive guffaw.

Irritated beyond endurance, Dick took up a piece of pebbly clay.

This he threw at him with a good aim.

It struck him in the mouth and carried away two teeth, which stuck in his throat and nearly choked him.

As soon as he recovered himself, he drew his pistol. With a trembling hand he fired.

The ball whistled harmlessly past Dick's thigh.

"Put it up," said the baron, forcing the weapon away from him; "you'll be sorry if you do murder."

"Curse him, I'll have another shot," roared Charley. The baron held the pistol in the air.

As quickly as he could, he fired off all the charges.

"Now take it," he said. "I'm your friend, man. Come and have a drink."

"Good bye," said Dick; "I don't bear malice, but I'll bet you'll find out who the real thief is before long."

Charley gave him a vindictive look, and taking the baron's arm, they walked off together.

A few of the miners had looked up when they heard the shots fired.

But scenes of violence were of frequent occurrence, and the business of diamond-hunting was so import-

and all-absorbing that they went with their washing, sorting and digging as if nothing had occurred when they saw that no blood was shed.

Only a few loafers followed the baron and Champagne Charley to Bourgain's bar.

These idle fellows knew that the baron was generally good-natured enough to stand drinks to the crowd when he had the money.

At Bourgain's the diamond was shown about freely.

It soon got bruited abroad that he, the laziest and most drunken man at the diggings, had found a splendid prize.

It was worth two thousand pounds if worth a penny, some said, and others declared it was worth as much again.

The few dealers who swarmed all over the diggings from Dutoit's Pass to Gong Gong and New Rush crowded into the bar.

The baron had an offer of fifteen hundred pounds for the stone, "and chance it."

"No," he said, "I shall hand it over to my friend Bourgain, here. If any dealer wants to see it he can, and I mean to take the highest offer. I'm not in a hurry to sell."

So the stone was handed over to the bar-keeper, who regarded it with admiration.

It was really a fine specimen of a Cape diamond, and not at all rough.

The "water" was excellent.

It was clear that the bidding for it would increase day by day, and that the owner had done a wise thing in not parting with it at once.

All day long men came in, dirty and mud-begrimed, to look at the famous stone.

Its history was soon recounted.

Of course every one believed the story about Dick, and he was looked upon as a young vagabond.

For the present Champagne Charley had his revenge.

If Dick had wanted employment in a claim at Gong Gong, there was not a miner who would have given him a day's work to save him from starving.

Wine and spirits flowed freely enough in Bourgain's booth that day, for the bar-keeper had the famous diamond in his possession, he was quite willing to treat his customers to any extent.

Every one ordered what he liked, and it "went down" to the baron.

About four in the afternoon, Champagne Charley went to his tent to dress his wound. The heat of the sun had made it throb and burn.

A team of wagons, or "cow chariots" had just arrived.

The travelers were busied in looking about them.

One of them a little, thin wizened, sallow-looking man approached him.

"I'm a stranger here," he said in a sharp voice. "Do you feel disposed to earn a five-pound note by answering a few questions?"

"Will a duck swim?" inquired Charley.

"Right. Been here long?"

"Over a twelvemonth."

"Done any good for yourself?" asked the thin man.

"Nothing to gas about."

"Are you getting a living?"

"Well," answered Charley, "I'm breathing. But why do you pick me out of the crowd?"

"I'm blunt. It's my way. No offense if I answer you straight?"

"None at all."

"Right. I selected you because you look a regular ruffian. Kind of stick-at-nothing villain, not over and above prosperous. A drunkard and a brawler."

"You are plain, and no mistake," said Charley. "I don't half like it."

"You said no offense, mind that," said the little man, stepping back in alarm.

"So I did, and I won't take any. What's your name?"

"Name of Corker, from London. Jimmy Corker."

"And what's your name at Gong Gong, Mr. Corker?" asked Charley.

The little man put his finger on his nose, and gave a knowing wink.

"That's tellings," he replied, cautiously. "Suppose we liquor up."

"You can; I'm full to the bung, ready to burst," answered Charley.

"Then we won't liquor. Come a bit on one side. Here's the flimsy take. I always like to pay up sharp."

Charley took the five-pound note, gave one look at it to ascertain if it was genuine, and crumpling it up, put it into his waistcoat pocket.

"Fivers," had been scarce with him lately. It did him good to see one.

"Now," began Corker, "do you know a man here, or at any of the diggings, called his lordship, or the captain, or Gentleman George?"

"There is one who goes by the name of the baron."

"What's he like?"

Charley described him as nearly as he could.

Mr. Corker from London took a photograph out of his pocket, and showed it to Charley.

"Is that anything near him?" he asked.

"It's him, all the way."

"Good," replied Corker.

He replaced the photograph.

His villainous little eyes twinkled with delight and satisfaction.

"I've made a good shot," he exclaimed. "I couldn't tell whether he was at Paiel, Klip Drift, Dutoit's Pass, or Gong Gong. It's lucky I've spotted him right off."

"What do you want with him?" inquired Charley.

"What would you undertake to—to—"

"To what?"

The ferrety little eyes looked into his, and seemed to read his very soul.

"To—knock—him—on—the—head—for?" said Corker, slowly.

Champagne Charley gave a sort of start, as if this question had taken him entirely by surprise.

"It—it wants thinking over," he said, with a gasp.

"Well, take your time."

"He's a pal of mine, you see."

"What's that to do with it?" said Corker, contemptuously. "You're not the sort of a man to hang back at selling a pal. I'll bet you've done time."

"Curse you!" cried Charley, "how did you know that?"

"By the cut of you. How much did you get. Was it five years penal?"

"No, it wasn't," cried Charley, surlily, "you let me alone."

"Never mind, I've had it," said Corker, consolingly, "and there's something about one goal bird which another of the same feather can never mistake."

"You've been lagged?"

"Yes, more than once, and shall be again perhaps. Now, we understand one another. Shall we work together? You can have a hundred for the job, straight off. If you won't, say so; there is no harm done."

Great beads of perspiration gathered on the brow of Champagne Charley.

This little, keen-looking, dried up, ferrety-eyed man was the most terrible companion he ever remembered to have had.

He talked about murder as coolly as if he had been ordering a steak and onions for his dinner.

The fiend in disguise could not have been more off-hand and collected.

Charley trembled in every limb.

"You are weak, and have had too much hash," said Corker; "that knock, too, hasn't improved you. We will go to your tent. You'll put me up to-night somehow, won't you?"

"Yes," replied Charley, mechanically.

"Good; lead the way. I'll put on a pipe while you pull yourself together, and then we'll send out for a bit of dinner. What do you say?"

"As you like," answered Charley, in the same stern voice.

The little man from London seemed to have established an influence over him which he found it impossible to shake off.

He was entirely under his control.

And this was the more remarkable as he had not known him half an hour.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ARRANGING A MURDER.

AS MAY be imagined, Dick was rather crestfallen when he made his way to the tent in which Mr. Barker, the third mate of the *Fox*, lived.

It was empty, but so strict are the ideas of honesty amongst the miners that no one would have thought of going inside to steal anything.

Indeed, it would have been dangerous to do so, as in the camp every one was his own policeman.

Sitting down till his companions returned, Dick thought over his strange life.

Dick saw now the danger of making an enemy, and wished he had not struck Champagne Charley. Mr. Barker and Messiter soon came back, and were surprised to find him looking so gloomy.

"Has anything happened?" asked Barker.

"Yes. I've found a whopping diamond, and lost my berth," replied Dick.

He related all that had occurred.

"What a precious rascal that Charley must be," said Messiter. "But it doesn't matter; you can join us. We've got a stunning claim, which has been only half worked, and which two fellows who are going to New Rush sold us for ten pounds."

"It serves me right for leaving you Harry," replied Dick.

"Don't say anything about that," replied Messiter, kindly; "Mr. Barker and I thought you were in a hurry to leave us, but we knew you would divide with us all you got."

"So I would. When do you start work?"

"To-morrow."

"I'm with you," said Dick. "But what worries me is that the baron should think I wanted to cheat him. How can I prove my innocence?"

"Time will show."

"It isn't pleasant to have a charge of that sort hanging over one, and I feel I should like to—but no matter. I'll have it out with somebody," Dick observed, clenching his fists.

Both Mr. Barker and Messiter tried to console him, but in vain.

He felt the change deeply, not caring so very much for his loss of a half-share in the splendid diamond he had so luckily and quickly found, though that was a disappointment, but hating to be thought thievish and mean, when he had been kindly treated and trusted.

They made some tea, cooked a slice of ham, ate that with some rough bread, and Barker lighted his pipe.

"We've need to work, lads," he exclaimed; "our coin's almost gone, and if we don't find something this week, we shall have to go out as hired servants at three half-crowns the day."

"Not bad pay either," said Messiter.

"No, for the matter of that, it isn't; but recollect, all you find is your master's, and you can't rise above your seven and sixpence a day."

"I see," remarked Dick. "There is no chance of making a fortune."

"Going out to-night?" asked Messiter.

"Not me," replied Barker. "I know what I am when I get on a booze. I'm like lots of other sailors, and can't leave off till I've blued all the coin, and as I'm banker, and the money I've got belongs to all three, it won't do for me to spend it."

"I'll go for a stroll with you, Harry," said Dick, who was feverish and excited.

"Don't get tight again to-night," observed Mr. Barker. "That won't do, young man."

"I'm not likely to go near the bars," replied Dick. "I only want to have a look about."

Messiter and Dick left the tent, and walked away from

the camp, it being a fine evening, and the climate delightful at all times when it did not rain.

There was a park-like scenery and a luxuriant bush, so different from the dreary waste which for hundreds of miles they had passed through in their ox wagons.

Many diggers were bathing in the shining river.

Some were drinking at the bars, others playing cards draughts, and even chess, or reading in their tents.

It was only the very lucky ones who could afford to spend the evenings in champagne and brandy.

There were many diamond seekers who had come all the way from England, Germany, and America, and had not found one stone of four carats, though they had washed tons upon tons of gravel, both from hill and flat.

This was hard toil and heart-breaking work.

But it was the luck of the fields.

The boys walked along pleasantly enough, as the country very much resembled that of England in August.

There were no snakes, mosquitoes, or other plagues to make their lives miserable.

Suddenly Dick said:

"Hold hard."

"What is it?" asked Messiter.

Putting his hand over Messiter's mouth, Dick said in a whisper:

"I hear Charley's voice to the left; lie down."

They both sank down in the scrub, and Dick crawled on his hands and knees towards a thicket of trees.

Hidden inside were two men.

One was Champagne Charley, the other Mr. Corker, who had come out into the solitude of the bush to have a friendly chat.

Dick thought it no sin to listen, as if his life depended upon his hearing every word.

In fact, a life did depend upon his doing so.

"Never mind what my object is in getting him killed out of the way," said Corker; "that's no business of yours so long as you do the job, is it?"

"No," replied Charley; "give me the chips, and I'm satisfied."

"When will you do it?"

"To-night. I'll strangle him in his tent, or if he's too drunk to leave Bourgain's bar, I'll do it there."

"How?"

"Tell you how," said Charley; "he and me's pals. Well, I'll pretend getting drunk with him, and we'll sleep together on the floor under the table. Twig?"

"Not quite."

"In the middle of the night I'll crawl up and strangle him."

"Will that be safe?" asked Corker, dubiously.

"Why not?"

"Mightn't he holler and kick up a row, which would wake the man Bourgain?"

Champagne Charley laughed a hollow, sepulchral sort of laugh.

"You've never seen me at work," he said, with a diabolical grin; "my pal used to call me the slaughterer. I was always good at choking, whether it was a bobby or a slave in a house we broke into. Lor', it's nothing when you've got the knock. Look 'ere."

Charley's fingers laid hold of Mr. Corker's throat, and twined round it with the dexterity of practice.

Mr. Corker uttered a gurgling groan, and pushed him off.

"I—I say," he startled and stammered, "don't you do—do that again. It's awful."

"I didn't mean to hurt you, but the fingers go round beautiful when you're used to it, the tongue comes out, the face gets black, and the eyes seem as if they were going to jump out at you."

Mr. Corker looked at him as if he thought he should not like him for an enemy.

"Tell you another thing I shall do," said Charley.

"What's that?"

"I mean having that diamond which a darned young whelp found for the baron this morning. I told you about it. By gum, it is a beauty."

"Where is it?"

"The baron gave it to Bourgain to keep for him. It will never do him any good. He's bound to drink it out."

"It's all settled, then?" said Corker.

"All, barring payment."

"You do the deed first. I'll meet you here at day-break—in this spot, mind—and give you the money."

"No, no," said Charley. "I'll have it now, or I chuck the job up."

"You are greedy."

"It ain't that, but I've given up trusting blokes. There are so many cross coves about. Part the hundred quid, and the baron's as good as dead."

With a sigh of reluctance, Mr. Corker handed the ruffian five twenty-pound notes, with which he was satisfied.

"You had five before," he remarked.

"Don't matter," replied Charley; "that makes it guineas, and it's more genteel."

This ended the conversation, and the two men walked away from the spot where they had concocted this diabolical assassination.

When they were gone, Dick looked carefully over the place where they had been standing.

On the grass he saw a piece of printed paper. It was very small, but he grabbed at it eagerly, and read it.

No doubt Mr. Corker had dropped it out of his pocket-book when he gave the notes to Charley.

It had been cut out of an English newspaper, though there was nothing to show the name of the journal.

It was simply a notice of a death.

It ran:

"On the 15th September, at Tregannon House, Cornwall, Lord Tregannon, by injuries sustained from a fall from his horse."

Dick wondered if this could relate in any way to the mysterious man called the baron, who was to be murdered that night by Champagne Charley.

For the present he could only make a guess.

When he returned to Messiter he looked very white and scared.

"What have you heard?" asked his friend.

"Quite enough to upset me," answered Dick. "But I mean to return good for evil."

"How?"

"My enemy, Champagne Charley, has just received one hundred pounds to murder the baron."

"Murder?" echoed Messiter in surprise.

"Yes; there is to be murder and robbery this night if I don't stop it. Come back, Harry. I must see Bourgain, the bar-keeper. We mustn't lose time."

Messiter asked no more questions, and the two boys made their way back to the camp at Gong Gong.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GOOD FOR EVIL.

DICK walked along moodily until he reached the outskirts of the encampment, which had already put on its quiet evening appearance.

Work was over for the day.

The diggers were enjoying themselves, each after his own fashion, and Dick fancied he should find the baron, as usual, drinking in Bourgain's bar.

"Can I be of any use to you?" asked Messiter.

"No, thanks. I am just going up camp, and shan't be long before I'm back," answered Dick.

"All right. Take care of yourself."

"No fear."

They shook hands and separated, Messiter going to have a hand at cribbage with the late third mate of the *Fox*, and Dick proceeding in search of the baron.

Contrary to his expectations, he did not find him in the bar, though Champagne Charley and Corker were there, as calm and self-possessed as if they had not just been planning a cool and dastardly murder.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Charley, on seeing Dick, "what are you mouching about for, my young snipe?"

"Fish and find out," replied Dick.

"Go on," cried Charley, "and don't give me any of your cheek."

"If you don't ask for it, you won't have it."

"Get out of this."

"I'm going," answered Dick, "not because you tell me, but I don't like being in the place with a blackguard like you."

"Be quick, or I'll help you," said Charley.

He raised his foot.

Dick purposely stood at the entrance to the bar, looking sideways at Charley, who advanced at a run to kick him.

Just as his raised foot came within a few inches of Dick's body, he turned sharply round, and seizing him by the ankle, gave it a twist with all his strength, and jerked him backwards.

Charley fell heavily on his back, and his fall was greeted with a shout of laughter by all in the bar.

"Bravo, young un; good again. He's one too many for you, Charles," cried several.

With a terrible oath, Champagne Charley rose to his feet and drew his knife.

"I'll have his life, curse him!" he exclaimed.

But Dick was gone.

He had taken advantage of the man's fall to get out of the booth and proceed in his search for the baron.

Charley continued to curse and swear, vowing that he'd have his revenge if he swung for it.

Dick strolled toward the river, thinking the baron might have gone to bathe.

Nor was he mistaken.

He met him before he had gone far, with a towel under his arm, which sufficiently showed what his occupation had been.

"Good evening," said Dick.

The baron gave him a careless nod, and was passing on.

"I want to speak to you," cried Dick.

"Very sorry. Can't have anything to say to you after what has happened."

"But you must."

"Must?" repeated the baron. "I am not in the habit of being talked to in that manner by boys. You deceived me this morning, when you had a very good thing on with me. When I find that I am being bested by any one, I always turn him up and have done with him; still, if you want a pound, I don't mind putting my hand in my pocket and giving it you."

"Thank you," said Dick, coldly; "keep your pound."

"Oh, all right. I daresay I can spend it, but as you don't want money, and I certainly shall not take you on again, I shall be obliged if you will not speak to me any more."

"I want to do you a service."

"What? Have you found another diamond?" exclaimed the baron, ironically.

"Bother the diamond! Do you value your life?" inquired Dick.

"My life?"

There was something in the boy's earnest tone which arrested his attention in spite of himself.

"Yes, your life; listen to me or not, as you like. If you do not, you will not have the chance to-morrow morning."

"Why not?" asked the baron, fixing his large, handsome, lustrous eyes upon Dick.

"Because you will not be alive."

The baron paused thoughtfully a moment.

"Look here, my lad," he said, at length, "I don't want any kid, and if I find you are having a lark with me, I'll mark you within an inch of your life."

"All right, that's a bargain. I'll give you leave to lick me till I can't stand if there is any rot about what I am saying. Just walk down toward the river with me, for I don't want to be overheard."

"Very well," said the baron, "But tell me why you should take an interest in me after the way I treated you this morning."

"In the first place," said Dick, "you are a gentleman, and I like you."

"Thank you," said the baron, with a smile.

"Secondly, I am innocent of any intention to cheat you: my only fault being forgetfulness."

"And thirdly?"

"Thirdly," said Dick, "you have been misled by a scoundrel who is even now thinking how he can murder you."

"Murder me? Do you mean Champagne Charley, as they call the fellow?" said the baron, startled.

"Yes."

"Why should he wish to harm me?"

"Can you think of no one who would wish you out of the way? Charley was talking just now to a strange man who has come up to the fields by the last wagon."

"If my eldest brother was dead," said the baron, as if talking to himself, "my youngest, who was always a scamp, might be induced to—but no; it is too horrible: I will not believe it."

Dick thought of the scrap of newspaper he had picked up near the spot where the confederates had been talking.

Taking it from his pocket, he handed it to the baron.

"Will this help you at all?" he asked.

The baron seized it, and held it with trembling fingers while he read:

"Death of Lord Tregannon—fall from his horse—died at Tregannon House," he said, hurriedly. "Where did you get this?"

"The strange man I am speaking of let it fall," answered Dick, surprised at his vehemence.

"My lad," said the baron, "I have changed my opinion of you. Forgive me for my unjust suspicions. You shall have the diamond you found all to yourself."

"I don't want it," replied Dick.

"But I say you shall have it. This little gift will make amends for the wrong I have done you."

"Give me a share of it. Say a third."

"No. Have it entirely. In future I shall want for nothing. Can you keep a secret?"

"I think so. Try me," replied Dick.

"The news you have brought me is invaluable. I don't want all the rag, tag and bobtail of the fields to know it, but by my brother's death, which is announced in this slip of paper, I come into a large fortune, fully ten thousand a year."

"Then you are Lord Tregannon?"

"I am. At my father's death I was almost penniless, and deeply in debt. I came over here with the first rush to make my fortune, but I was disgusted with the world, and drank too much. Now I will show my enemies what I am made of."

"You have enemies, then?" inquired Dick.

"Unhappily, I have; and I am sorry to say that my youngest brother—at least, so I suspect—has sent a villain out here to get me out of the way. He always said I should never come into the title and estates. But tell me all you have heard."

Dick related the conversation which had taken place between Mr. Corker of London and Champagne Charley.

"So they mean to kill me to-night, and steal the diamond, do they?" exclaimed Lord Tregannon. "I'll take precious good care they don't."

"Be careful, my lord."

"I will. I have something to live for now, and I will never forget you, lad. Who are you? Give me an outline of your history."

Dick did so as briskly as he could.

The pleasant river ran rippling by at their feet, as they sat on a bank in the declining sunshine.

At times the sound of revelry and even of musical instruments were borne on the breeze from the camp.

His lordship listened to Dick's history with the utmost attention.

"You have had some strange adventures," he remarked, when Dick brought his tale to a conclusion, "especially the voyage in the vessel and the visit to the underground world. That Dugard must have been a fine fellow."

"He was," said Dick.

"Pity he was killed, and I feel sorry for poor Snarley and the professor. However, it's a queer world, and not altogether a bed of roses for a good many of us. I suppose you and Messiter don't care about stopping here?"

"No," said Dick, "we don't want to go back penniless, but if you don't want the diamond—"

"It is yours; say no more about it. Will you leave the fields with me by the next wagon?"

"With pleasure."

"That's right. I'll see you safe back to England, and if you will allow me, when you're married to Henrietta, I will give the bride away."

"Thank you, my lord," said Dick. "We shall both be proud."

"And now back to camp; we must circumvent these rascals. I don't part with my life so easily as they think. Yesterday I did not value it very highly, but to-day things are altered. It is not the lot of every man to get a title and ten thousand a year, eh, Lighthouse?"

Dick thought not, and they walked back together.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ROBBERY OF THE DIAMOND.

THE baron, whom we shall in future call Lord Tregannon, was not a man to do things by halves.

If there was a danger before him, he went straight at it without any fencing about the bush.

He and Dick went arm in arm up camp, till they got opposite Bourgain's bar.

"You won't go in there?" said Dick, hanging back.

"But I shall," was the reply.

"Champagne Charley and his friend are there."

"All the better. See these?" asked Tregannon, pointing to a couple of pistols as he unbuttoned his coat, "they can bite as well as bark. I always carry them; though I don't show them. To-night any one can look at them."

Dick followed him into the bar with some reluctance, and found it crowded as usual with the fast portion of the diggers, who could find no better way of spending

their earnings and their money than in drinking and smoking.

Charley saw them enter, and purposely taking no notice of Dick, said:

"What cheer, my noble swell?"

Tregannon took him by the arm, and led him into a corner.

"I know your game, Charley, and it won't wash," he said quietly.

"What do you mean?" asked the ruffian.

"I have received letters from England."

"Well, what then?"

"You've been paid to kill me. I know all about it."

"Letters from England wouldn't tell you that," answered Charley, insolently.

"Never mind; I'm fly, and I'll shoot you like a dog if you try it on. Is that good enough for you?"

"It's a lie," said Charley.

"No, it isn't. But I'm not going to argue the point with you. I've given you the tip. I'll shoot you if you come any humbug over me. Is that straight enough?"

"Don't be a fool," said Charley with a laugh; "you've got a touch of d. t.; stand a drink, and shut up."

"You'll get no drinks from me. Keep your own company," answered Tregannon.

With an oath Charley turned away and joined his companion.

"Is that the cove?"

"Yes," replied Charley, shortly.

"I thought so, from the family likeness. What's riled him?"

"How should I know? Something's got his shirt out. Curse him!" said Charley, sullenly.

Several of the roughs and rowdies were getting very tipsy.

Charley had been spending his money freely, and intoxication was the result.

Bourgain refused to serve some of them any more, and a disposition to create a riot was the result.

"You won't serve me?" said one burly fellow, called Bullocky Jim. "Why, you French wasp, I'll burn your bar over your head."

"Well said, Jim," cried Charley; "we've had a fire for less than that before now."

"Burn him out! burn him out!" roared the roughs.

As if such a proceeding would suit him exactly, Champagne Charley encouraged his mates as best he could.

Bourgain produced a revolver.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he said, "what is this? What for you say you burn me out? Look you here, I shoot first man that tries to burn."

Bullocky Jim laughed derisively.

"You shoot?" he said. "You couldn't kill a cock sparrow on a tree if you did. Bring out the lusk."

But the fiery little Frenchman's temper was up, and he would make no concession.

Finding he would give them nothing more, the roughs began to smash the glasses and break up the seats.

Charley went outside and was absent a few minutes.

When he came back a strong smell of smoke issued from the rear of the premises.

"*Sacre nom de nom de nom!*" screamed little Bourgain. "Zey burn me out. Ah, thieves! I put out ze fire in your blood."

He fired his revolver three times rapidly.

The first shot missed, the second wounded a man in the arm, and the third brought down Bullocky Jim, weltering in his blood.

A terrible outcry arose.

Knives leaped from their sheaths, and revolvers gleamed in the glare of the lamps and candles.

All was instantly confusion and riot.

"He's killed Bullocky! Down with him! Shoot the Frenchman!" were cries that rose on all sides.

Dick grasped Tregannon's arm.

"Come to my tent," he exclaimed. "We are not safe here. Now is Charley's chance."

"I can't stand by and see this," said Tregannon. "Besides, they will rob the store and get the diamond."

"Let it go. Don't risk your life."

"If you're afraid, leave me," said Tregannon.

"It isn't for myself I was speaking," answered Dick. "I am in a funk for you."

"Never mind me. I'm going to have a cut in. Back, you villains! What has the man done to you?" exclaimed Tregannon, boldly.

A rush was made at the bar, and it fell over, bringing down glasses, bottles and lamps.

The booth was plunged in darkness.

Shots were fired at random, and the few who sided with Tregannon, and were disposed to take the side of order, did all they could to keep the unruly mob back.

The darkness only increased the confusion.

By the faint moonlight which streamed into the bar, Dick thought he saw Champagne Charley's form striding over the debris of the bar, and disappear in the darkness behind.

Perhaps he knew where the little Frenchman kept his valuables, and was making for the diamond.

Obedying an irresistible instinct, he sprang over the bar and followed the shadowy form.

The voice of the Frenchman was no longer heard, and Dick feared he had been badly injured, if not killed, in defending his property.

It was a scene of terrible lawlessness and violence such as can only be seen in such a community as that which was assembled at the diamond fields.

The smoke behind the bar increased so rapidly, and poured out in such thick volumes, that Dick was almost suffocated.

He could see nothing of Charley, and was about to grope his way back again, when some one pushed against him.

Closing with his antagonist, a fearful struggle took place in the smoke and darkness.

His opponent was evidently a strong man, with whom he had little chance, and the only result of his courage was to find himself thrown violently against the wood-work of the wall.

Here he lay half-stunned, until the crackling of the advancing flames recalled him to a sense of his danger.

Crawling on his hands and knees, he reached the remains of the bar just as the roof fell in.

It was with the utmost difficulty that he contrived to extricate himself, and much bruised and bleeding, he at length joined the crowd outside.

The whole camp was roused.

Forming a chain, the diggers passed buckets of water one to the other, and tried to extinguish the flames.

This, however, they were unable to do.

All they could effect was to confine the fire to where it had broken out.

But the entire premises of the unhappy Bourgain were burnt to the ground.

The body of the Frenchman, quite dead and dreadfully charred, was afterward drawn out.

Great indignation was expressed by the diggers against Champagne Charley, and threats of lynching him were heard could he be caught.

But the fellow could not be found anywhere.

He and Corker had made their escape.

The camp had had a narrow let-off from total destruction, for, had a high wind been blowing at the time, it was extremely probable that every tent and wooden erection would have been burnt.

When the ruins were searched several dead bodies were found, the result of the stabbing and firing which took place.

Bullocky Jim was among the victims.

But nothing could be seen of the iron box in which the Frenchman kept the diamonds he either bought or took care of for the diggers.

This was subsequently discovered, broken open and empty, outside the camp.

It was clear that it had been stolen, and no one doubted that Charley was the thief.

Dick guessed that this was the man he had struggled with inside the booth.

Small parties of miners scoured the surrounding country in the morning, but without any success.

Champagne Charley and Corker had disappeared, leaving no trace behind them.

And with them had gone the valuable diamond which Dick had begun to look upon as his property.

Still the life of Lord Tregannon was safe.

How long would it remain so, when two unscrupulous villains were sworn to take it?

CHAPTER XLI.

MURDER AT MIDNIGHT.

THE excitement at the diggings did not cool down until the evening of the following day.

All were willing enough to tar and feather, or even hang the wretches, could they be found, but wasting time in catching them was another thing.

Tregannon had come into Dick's tent, and received the congratulations of the little party upon being well rid of such dangerous enemies.

"Let them go," said Mr. Barker, "I wouldn't soil my hands with such swabs. Give them a wide birth. Work in your claim with Lightheart until you find a diamond valuable enough to take you home, and then return to England."

"Thank you very kindly for your advice," replied Tregannon, "but I shall not go home while either of those villains live."

Mr. Barker laughed.

"You'll find hunting them like looking for the needle in a bundle of hay, I'm thinking, when they're miles away by this time," he said.

"I don't think so," replied Tregannon.

"Nor I," replied Dick.

"How's that?"

"I think I can guess what Dick is driving at," said Messiter. "We have heard Lord Tregannon's story, and know that the two men want to kill him; it is what Corker is paid out here for. Well, it isn't likely they'll go back without having another try at it."

"Exactly," replied Dick; "that is just my opinion."

"Perhaps you are right," said Barker. "But you must keep your weather eye open with such fellows as that."

"I'm as downy as they are when I'm sober," returned Tregannon, candidly; "and I mean to cut the drink from this time forth. I'm not the poor waif and stray I was a little while ago."

"Glad to hear you say that," said Dick, joyfully. "Look how the professor ruined himself and destroyed his mind by lushing."

"You and I, Lightheart, ought to be a match for the villains," said Tregannon, thoughtfully.

"I'll go with you all over the country," replied Dick; "for I feel very sore about that diamond. I want the stone to give to my mother. It will be a nice present."

"I'm wild to think Charley should get off with it, after murdering Bourgain, and burning his store," observed Mr. Barker.

"To-morrow we'll start," said Tregannon; "depend upon it, they're lurking about somewhere."

"What do you say to a game at whist?" asked Barker, producing a dirty pack of cards.

"I'm on," replied Dick; "Lord Tregannon and I will play you and Harry."

They drew their chairs up to the roughly-made deal table; the men lighted their pipes, and the game began.

It might have been twelve o'clock when Mr. Barker exclaimed:

"That makes three games we've lost. You're too strong for us; but we'll have our revenge another night."

Suddenly an evil face looked in at the tent opening.

The gleaming barrel of a pistol was revealed; a shot was heard, the tent was filled with smoke, and Mr. Barker rolled from his stool to the ground.

Every one sprang to his feet, with consternation depicted on their features.

Dick rushed out with a revolver in his hand, and seeing a form retreating in the distance, fired twice in quick succession.

There was a cry of mingled rage and pain.

One, if not both, of the shots had evidently taken effect.

"Quick, a lantern, Harry," he exclaimed. "I've his one of the thieves. He'll get off if I'm not after him."

But Messiter was on his knees, supporting the form of the late third mate of the *Fox*.

Tregannon was bending over him, trying to staunch the fast-flowing blood with a handkerchief.

"Is he much hurt?" asked Dick, forgetting the thieves in his anxiety for Mr. Barker.

Tregannon shook his head.

"It's all over with me. Shot in the lungs. Made my last voyage, and going aloft now," gasped the wounded man.

"Cheer up, messmate. You'll make many a run out and home yet," said Messiter.

He affected a cheerfulness he was far from feeling.

It was quite clear that the third mate's sands of life were quickly running out.

He had, as he truly said, "made his last voyage, and was going aloft."

"Some rascal," observed Tregannon, "whom I suppose to be Champagne Charley, must have taken you for me. He saw a man in the tent with the boys, and knowing nothing about you, and being unable to ascertain the difference in the face, owing to the imperfect light, shot in a hurry."

"Don't grieve for me, friend," said Barker. "My log's been tidily kept, and I've got a clean bill of health. There's One up above who won't be too hard on a poor sailor."

"I am deeply grieved that you should be the victim of this new outrage."

"Belay there. We all owe heaven a death. The storm's caught me rather unawares, or I'd have made all snug. Howsomdever, it aint for me to grumble."

"I'll revenge this," cried Lord Tregannon fiercely.

"No, no," said the dying man; "leave that to the Lord. We must always say, 'His will be done.' Let me bleed. It's no use manning the pumps, sir. There's blood in the hold, and its rising up flush with the lungs. It'll soon be over."

"My poor fellow, what can I do to save you," asked Tregannon.

"It's no good, sir; I've got my ticket. Still if you do go back to England, I—I—"

The blood rushed in a stream to his mouth and nearly choked him.

"Ease his head a bit, Harry," said Dick.

Messiter raised the mate's head, and the suffocation passed off for a moment.

"There's a bit of a locket tied round my neck, sir," Barker went on. "It was she who put it there, and the ribbon was the nicest, but it's gone any color now. It's Fan's likeness. She lives at Portsmouth, sir. If you could only tell her I died honorable like, and never showed the white feather, it might comfort the poor lass a bit."

A tear came into the honest fellow's eyes.

"Ask for Fan Collins," he went on. "Her father's a ship chandler; I could have wished to send her a bit of money, but—"

"Make your mind easy on that head. I'll see to Fan," interrupted Lord Tregannon.

"This was to have been my last voyage. They say there's no splicing in Heaven, sir. Be that true," asked Barker.

"Never mind that; you will meet; don't doubt it."

"Right. Thank you, sir. If so be as we must, I don't care. You're a gentleman born and bred, and ought to know."

His breathing came thick and fast.

The choking was more continuous, and blood stained his lips, which showed that there was internal bleeding. Several diggers who had heard and been roused by the shots, were looking in at the tent's opening, curiously.

Dick explained to them what had happened, and the indignation already evidenced toward Charley was intensified tenfold.

"So help me, Tommy!" cried a stalwart digger; "if we oughtn't to wipe out that varmint."

"Hush," said Dick, as Tregannon held up his hand to enjoin silence.

All was instantly still.

The rough, hairy-bearded men who were looking on, seemed deeply impressed with this affecting death scene. Far from home, and without any settled law or government, a crime like that of Charley's made a deep and lasting impression upon them.

"You'll see to Fan for me?" said the dying mate; his voice so low and husky that Tregannon and Messiter had to put their ears to his lips to hear what he said.

"Yes. I'll be a brother to her," answered Tregannon.

"Thank you for that. It's night, isn't it? Has the captain ordered the lights out? It's all dark. Dar—dar—dark."

His head fell back and his eyes closed.

A rush of blood to his throat took place, and with a fearful struggle he laid himself down, never to move again.

"He is dead. God be good to him," said Tregannon.

"And to all of us," echoed the miners, as if they were repeating one of the responses of the Litany in a church.

"See to your friend, Messiter. We leave you in charge!" cried Tregannon, excitedly; "where is Lightheart?"

"Here," said Dick.

"Are you ready?"

"For what?"

"An immediate start. The thieves are near. We can't afford to lose sight of them. We must be off at once."

"Right," said Dick. "We'll wire in and get our names up."

Champagne Charley and his companion scarcely expected such a vigorous pursuit; but they did not know the working energy there was in the formerly easy-going baron, whose accession to a title and wealth had made him a different man.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CHASE OF THE THIEVES.

PROVIDING themselves with a lantern, and declining all assistance, Dick and Tregannon left the tent, and proceeded on the track.

"You say you heard a cry when you fired the last shot?" asked Tregannon.

"Yes," said Dick.

"Easy does it, then. We ought to look for marks of blood."

Dick, holding the lantern, carefully examined the ground, moving about like a sporting dog looking for the scent.

Suddenly he said:

"What is this?"

Tregannon was close at his heels, and bending down, scrutinized the ground.

"That's human blood," he said, "we've struck the track. Gently, follow it up."

Patches of blood were now frequent and the man who had been hit, whoever he was, seemed to be badly hurt.

The track led down to the river, and here was lost.

"They must have crossed the stream; it isn't very deep here," remarked Dick.

"Perhaps they forded it. Suppose we do the same?" cried Tregannon.

"Stop," said Dick; there is a boat a little higher up. It's no use getting wet for nothing. Wait here, will you, while I go and get it."

Tregannon marked the spot, and Dick obtained the boat, dropping down the stream, and picking up his companion.

On the other side were marks of people having recently got out of the water.

The track was now easy to follow.

It led into the bush, and the dripping water, mingled with blood, was plainly distinguishable on the dry earth.

All at once it ceased.

"What does this mean?" asked Tregannon.

There was no shelter within miles, and the fugitives could not have taken refuge anywhere.

Dick placed the lantern on the ground, and groped about as before.

Raising himself up, he ejaculated:

"Horses!"

"Ah, they had horses in waiting, but how could a wounded man ride a horse?" said Tregannon.

"Perhaps one carried the other. I can't tell. Here, however, are the horses' marks. What is to be done?"

"Follow on."

"Right," said Dick, putting the lantern down; "I may as well chuck this away; it will be daylight directly."

"Stop a bit," said Tregannon, "I will tell you what these fellows would do."

"What?"

"You know the Dutch farmers in this country are called boers. There is a boer's house about ten miles from here in a direct line northeast. They would be most likely to hide there, making it their headquarters. It's there they would get their horses."

"Can you find the way at night?"

"I think so. Farmer Van Dunk inhabits the house, and he works the farm. His sons are all at the fields diamond hunting. I made Van Dunk's acquaintance one day when I had a long walk out. He would do anything for me. I'll bet a million that's where they have gone."

"Step out then," said Dick; "you shall be the guide."

"If we can only trap them there," said Tregannon, joyfully, "we shall get your diamond, and avenge the death of my poor little Bourgain and your friend Barker."

"The murdering villains ought to be hung," remarked Dick. "If we take them alive, let's hang them."

"You may hang, draw and quarter them, as they used to do in the olden times, if you like," replied Tregannon, "but be silent while the darkness lasts, for fear of an ambush."

Dick nodded, and they walked on side by side in somber silence, which was only relieved by occasional noises of the night.

CHAPTER XLIII.

TOMMY BEGG.

THE companions walked steadily on till daylight broke, and then they halted.

All around them was an undulating prairie ground, the property of some Dutch farmer, capable of grazing hundreds of heads of cattle.

"I'm afraid," said Tregannon, that "I'm a little out of my reckoning. Either we're very near the boer's, or we've taken the wrong path, and are miles away."

"That's awkward," replied Dick; "I shouldn't object to a cup of coffee and a roll; failing that, a biscuit, some salt junk, and a drink of water wouldn't be bad."

"We must be a good ten miles from camp," answered Tregannon, musingly.

"All that."

"Suppose we separate and make an exploration. Let us cast about. You to the left, I to the right, and meet again here in a couple of hours."

"I don't mind," replied Dick.

"It's a pity we did not bring some provision, and water with us, but I started in a state of excitement, and did not expect such a long chase as this after the thieves."

"I can hold out. I've lasted for four-and-twenty hours before this, and been none the worse for it."

"Very well," said Tregannon. "Work round for this spot in a couple of hours, and try to find either the rascals themselves or the boer's house."

Dick nodded his head, and, shaking hands, they parted. He walked steadily through the long grass, keeping always to the left, and saw the sun rise gloriously in the east.

For more than two hours Dick trudged on gallantly without finding any sign of a dwelling to reward his perseverance and endurance. He thought of turning back, for he was hungry and thirsty, and his limbs were faint

from exertion, whilst his head ached from excitement and want of sleep. Retracing his steps, he wandered about in a purposeless manner, for he was totally unable to find the way by which he had come. Round and round he went, first this way and then that, backwards and forwards, to the right and to the left. At length he sank down on the edge of a clearing, thoroughly exhausted in mind and body. He was lost. Lost! As he uttered the doleful word it rang in his ear like a death knell, for to be lost in the bush under such circumstances was death.

He recalled the many tales he had heard in camp of stragglers being starved to death in the wilderness, unable to find a sign to direct their footsteps, or a ministering hand to wet their parched lips with a pannikin of water. As a last resort, he drew a revolver from his breast and fired it. Once—twice. Scarcely had the last discharge found an echo among a few aged trees which yet fringed the clearing, than an elfin voice rang in his ears.

"Yah! yah! yah!"

Was it some demon mocking him, or did he really listen to a human being?

Starting up, he looked round him in a dazed manner.

"Yah!" said the same voice again, "you're a nice un, wastin' powder and shot, when there ain't a feather to shoot at."

Dick saw, a few paces off, seated on the trunk of a tree which had recently been cut down, a little, old-fashioned boy, much older than he looked. He was one of those boys who are men before their time, and though small in stature, yet know as much of the world as many of their seniors.

"Who are you?" asked Dick.

"Tommy Begg," was the answer.

"What are you doing here?"

"Tendin' of sheep, that's my graft. Look 'ee here, mate, you're lost, ain't you?"

"Yes, I am," replied Dick.

"All right. I've got my breakfast with me, and if a bit of damper cake and a drink of cold tea's any good to you, have it and welcome, and you can't say Tommy's a bad sort."

"Thank you kindly," said Dick, running up to him; "you will put new life into me."

Tommy handed him some unleavened corn cake, and gave him some tea out of a quart can, saying, "Yah! Yah! to think as a cove should have lost his way. Why I know my way by the stars."

"Suppose there ain't any stars out," said Dick.

"Then I judges it by marks I've got. They couldn't lose me in Whitechapel, and Tommy will take his oath they don't out here. Yah! Yah!"

"Are you from London?" asked Dick, taking a refreshing drink out of the tea can.

"'Twas a couple of years ago," said Tommy, "and me and father used to live in Bluegate Fields. Oh! wasn't it a stived up den? Mother drank herself to death with gin, sister died of the fever, and the baby went off too. So father and me saved up a bit, and came out to the diggings."

"Saved up?" repeated Dick.

"Well, he did a bit o' thievin', and so did I. Anyhow, we made up the money to go somehow, and come out to find diamonds; but we hadn't luck, so father he took service with a boer—that's a Dutch farmer, you know—and we've got a bit o' money and a house to live in. Father thinks of settlin' soon."

"Do you like it better than London?" asked Dick.

"Well, you see," said Tommy, wisely, "I've got the open air here, and a decent house, and my belly full of wholesome victuals. That's something, ain't it? But I'll tell you what."

He paused a moment.

"What?" inquired Dick.

"I miss my boys," said Tommy. "I ain't got no pals. It's so thundering jolly lonely. There's no larks, no pitch and toss, no giving a fellow a back or cat-hunting, or plaguing the old women. Oh my, the sprees we used to have down Ratcliff Highway! Yah! yah!"

Dick laughed with him out of sympathy.

"I wish I was back again sometimes, I do," answered Tommy, gravely, "but father says he should have been a lifer if he had stopped, and I should have had seven years before long; and this 'ere beautiful country must be better nor a prison; leastways father says it is, and he ought to know, anyway."

"What's the name of the boer you work for," asked Dick.

"Van Dunk. It's a rum name, and he's a rum chap."

"Isn't his the only house within some miles?"

"Yes I don't know of another within a long way. We do nearly all the trade with the diggings in meat and milk, and eggs and sich," replied Tommy.

"Have you had any lodgers lately?"

"Lodgers?" said Tommy scratching his head; "not exactly. We often have chaps who come for a pitch in the barn just for a night, and I saw two yesterday. They borrowed a horse of the master, and was very flush with their coin."

"That's them," replied Dick.

"What do you mean?"

"Two that I want to get hold of. Which way does your farm lie Tommy?"

"You'll see it when you get past that clump of trees. It ain't far."

"Well, I'll say good-bye, and go on. Thank you for me, Tommy," said Dick.

"You're welcome," answered the boy.

Dick waved his hand, and quickly passed through a clump of trees, after which he saw a substantially-built house about a mile in front of him.

He had no doubt at all that Champagne Charley and his friend had taken refuge at the boer's. They thought they had killed the baron, and would have made for the coast had not one been wounded. Which of the two that was he could not tell. It was his determination to attack them single-handed, and see if he could not have the honor and distinction of bringing at least one of them alive into camp, to be dealt with as the diggers might decide. The enterprise was full of peril. But Dick was used to danger, and he had pluck enough to

carry him through what most boys would have shrunk from facing.

A quarter of an hour's walk brought Dick to the boer's holding. At the rear of the low-built, white-washed house, was the stock-yard, in which were some cattle, and behind that again was a barn. A small window without any glass in it tempted him to look through, which he was able to do by standing on tiptoe. The sound of voices fell upon his ears. On a heap of rough straw lay a man, whom he at once recognized as Corker, and he seemed to be in great pain. It was this man that he had shot. Champagne Charley was sitting by his side, smoking a short pipe.

Fearing that his hiding place would be discovered because of the noise Corker was making, Charley raised a stick he had, and struck him twice, killing him dead.

Dick compelled Charley to quit the barn, and outside they were joined by Lord Tregannon, who had come across Tommy, and after asking him a few questions, had got him to guide him to the farm, fearing that Dick alone might get into trouble.

"There's the prisoner," said Dick, as he tied him to one of his stirrup irons, "and he doesn't go out of my sight till he's hanged. Where's Tommy?"

"Here I am," answered the boy, who had been into the barn, and came out carrying a thick cane in his hand. "Look what I've got. It don't seem very valuable, do it?"

"No. I can't say it does," replied Dick.

"Ain't it, though? Yah! yah! yah! You don't know nothing about it. He does, though. Look at him grindin' of his teeth as if he was fit to eat me."

Tommy pointed derisively to Champagne Charley, who was furious with passion, which increased as the lad's "Yah! yah! yah!" rang out on the crisp air.

CHAPTER XLIV.

FRESH PERILS.

THE fierce rage and the frantic struggles of Charley were ludicrous to witness. He dragged the stirrup, trying to get at the lad, until he irritated the horse and made him kick.

"Oh, you young imp," he cried; "you've been a-spying and a-prying; I'll break your bones if I can only get hold of you."

But Tommy kept out of his way.

"You can't do it, yah!" he exclaimed. "Who cares for you? Dry up, you one-horse duffer. Yah! yah! I'm safe enough, and I'll split on you, there. Yah! yah! yah!"

Charley danced and swore like a Pagan. Dick had taken the cane from Tommy, and was holding it up doubtfully.

"What's this got to do with the diamonds?" he asked.

"It's got all to do with them."

"How?"

"Cos it's 'oller," said Tommy.

"Oh, you viper! you wenermous young serpint!" roared Charley.

"Don't you see," continued Tommy, "that it's got a cork shoved in the top?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"Well, you draw that out; the diamonds is in the 'ollar of the cane. I see him put 'em in. I had my 'ead et the winder, but he didn't twig me."

"I'll brain you," cried Charley, trying again to get at him.

"You would if you could, but you can't, old pal," answered Tommy, putting his tongue in his cheek. "Ain't you bottled up nice? Yah! yah!"

Dick lost no time in removing the cork from the top of the cane, and taking off his hat, he allowed the precious stones which Charley had stolen from Bourgain to fall into it. Amongst them was the big diamond he had found, and which had afterwards been given to him. Lord Tregannon bent over him.

"I congratulate you on your discovery," he said.

"Thank you," replied Dick. "I think we've got the best of him now."

Suddenly they were aroused from the contemplation of the diamonds by loud cries from Tommy.

"Look out! He's off! Oh, the clever beggar! He'd get out of Newgate Stop 'im! Hi! hi! yah! yah! What are you up to?"

But Charley had cleared the strawyard, and had passed out of the gate.

"He's a clever devil, anyhow. Well, we've got the diamonds, that's one comfort; let him go. The rope's made for him, I expect, and he'll swing sooner or later. Tommy, you follow him up as well as you can, and if he falls off, let me know."

Tommy nodded, and started off at his best pace after Charley, who was disappearing in the distance. At such a pace did he go, that his body was but a faint spect on horizon. Dick returned the stones to the hollow of the cane, and replaced the cork, thinking they could not have a better receptacle for the present. Then he beckoned Tregannon into the barn, and pointed out the body of Corker.

"Do you know him?"

Tregannon shook his head, but he examined his pockets, and found some letters, which he read attentively.

"It is as I thought," he said; "this wretch is an agent of my younger brother, who has sent him out here to murder me."

"Horrible," replied Dick.

"Isn't it dreadful to think that a brother can be so base? When I get to England I shall prove his villainy to him, and give him a few hundreds to go abroad with. I'll not have him in the same country with me. I wouldn't have believed it, though, if I hadn't seen it in black and white."

Dick said nothing, as the subject was a painful one. Before they returned to camp, they found the boer, to whom they related what had happened, and he assisted them to bury the body of Corker under a tree.

Then they partook of some refreshment which the hospitable farmer pressed upon them, and wended their way

back to camp across the pleasant prairie. Dick asked his companion whether he might keep all the stones that Charley had stolen from Bourgain, and Tregannon replied that, as Bourgain had no relations, he might as well have them as any one else. The value of the plunder came to several thousand pounds. Determined to give them up if any one had a better claim to them, Dick trudged along with the precious stick in his hand, until they came up with Tommy and his sheep.

As they expected, he had been unable to overtake Charley, but he had found the horse, which came limping back towards the farm as if it had been hurt by a fall. What had become of the murderer they could not tell. The next morning they bade adieu to the fields, and took passage in a wagon which was returning to coast, it being their intention to engage berths in the first steamship going from Algoa Bay to England.

When within a week's journey of Port Elizabeth, they encamped in a wide and barren country. The oxen cropped the stunted grass. The drivers drew water from a small, muddy stream, and the passengers cooked such provisions as they had left. The drivers informed the passengers that there had been some robberies on the road lately, about the spot where they were, and advised them to be careful.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Messiter, "if it's that fellow, Charley. He'd make his way to the coast, and you may bet he means having that big diamond of yours, Dick."

"Not he," answered Dick.

"There is some sense in what Messiter says," said Lord Tregannon; "you know what an unscrupulous ruffian the villain is."

"I think he's broken his neck by this time," said Dick; "anyhow, he'd be afraid to venture near us, because we know too much about him."

"Will you take a fool's advice?" said Messiter.

"Yours, do you mean?"

"Yes—mine."

"I can't tell, till I hear what it is."

"Remove the diamonds out of the hollow cane, and put them in the lining of your hat, or the toe of your boot if it's big enough. If Charley should be lurking about, he'll try and have the cane, thinking the stones are there."

"There is some sense in that," said Dick. "Tell you what I'll do. I've got a little bag, and I'll put them in that, and hang it round my neck."

He lost no time in doing as he said, and the big diamond, with a couple of dozen others, whose ineffectual fire paled before that of the monster, was hung safely round his neck.

"Now," he said, laughing, "they must have my life to get at my property."

"I've got an interest in the diamonds, too. You'll give me half-a-dozen to make presents when we get home?" asked Messiter.

"Of course I will, Harry. You shall take your pick, only I must keep the big one."

"For whom?"

"I thought of mother, but on second thoughts it shall go to Henrietta, because then I shall have it again when we're married," said Dick.

"Oh, you artful old Jew," laughed Messiter.

Nothing like looking after number one," said Dick, joining in the merriment. "What would my governor do for me? I'll lay anything he'll be awfully rusty when we get back, and call me all the scamps he can lay his tongue to."

"Well," said Lord Tregannon, "you have been a scape-grace from what you have yourself told me."

"Good job too," I like it," replied Dick.

"Never mind," continued Tregannon; "if your governor kicks you out, come to me. You shall never want a home or a fiver, either of you, while I live. I am not a half-and-half sort of a friend. You'll find, and I go the whole hog or none."

Dick thanked him for the offer, but declared that he would never be dependent upon any one. Rather would he work for a living. He was young and strong, and did not fear the world. Night came and he crept into the wagon, and threw himself down in a sheltered corner.

Messiter was near him, and he was soon fast asleep. It might have been about midnight when he felt some one touch his arm, and at the same time a heavy breathing was audible, close to his face.

"Don't Harry," he said, half asleep, "keep on your own side."

After this all was still, and he went to asleep again with the impression that Messiter had a very bad nightmare, and was touching him with his arms or legs. Then he had a dream. He fancied that Charley was kneeling upon his breast and suffocating him with his weight; he could see the fierce eyes glaring down upon him like burning coals, and held over his head was a cruel-looking, murderous knife.

"Help! help!" he screamed, as he got into a sitting position. He looked about him in the imperfect light, and saw a human form crawling past the bodies of the sleeping passengers. Feeling for the cane which he had put by his side, he found it was gone. Then he had no doubt that Charley had crept into the wagon and stolen it, not knowing that the diamonds had only that day been removed. Without hesitation, Dick drew his pistol and fired. But the creeping form at that moment reached the end of the wagon, and slipped down on the ground. The shot roused the occupants of the wagon, who started up with oaths and curses. Dick explained that a thief had been robbing him. No one but Messiter and Tregannon believed him.

The others abused him for an idiot, and told him not to be a fool and wake them again, or they'd know the reason why. Dick got up and looked about him, though his search was unsuccessful.

"Anyhow he'll be sold," he muttered. "It was lucky indeed that I put the diamonds in the bag. What a lark it will be when he comes to take the cork out of the cane."

He continued walking about on the watch till the morning. There was no more sleep for him that night. But his watch was undisturbed by any incident. Charley—

if indeed it was he—had made tracks with surprising celerity.

Champagne Charley, who had arrived some days before, put up a job with a woman to inveigle Dick into a saloon for the purpose of robbing him. When he found out the character of the place he attempted to retreat to the door. Several men interposed to stop him, and a general rush was made upon him. Though he struck out freely, he was grasped from behind, and Charley hissed in his ear—

"The diamonds. Where are they? Give them up and save your life."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SHARK'S PREY.

In reply to Champagne Charley's whispered request, Dick said "Never!"

"You won't give 'em up?" exclaimed Charley.

"No. I haven't got them."

"Who then?"

"The baron," answered Dick.

"It's a lie. The young swab's got 'em somewhere about him, I'll swear," said the woman.

Half a dozen hands had seized Dick. He was being pulled about more than he liked, and had no chance.

"Curse you," cried Charley, "I'll shake the liver out of you if you don't speak."

Dick's only reply was to make a fearful effort to escape. Charley had his knuckles inside his coat collar, and a sudden wrench burst the button off his shirt. The bag of diamonds round his neck was disclosed to view. A cry of joy broke from Charley. It was echoed by the surrounding ruffians.

"It's here," exclaimed Charley, "I've got it."

He tore the bag off Dick's neck.

"Chuck him out. He's no good now," he cried.

One glance at the contents of the bag satisfied Charley that he had got the prize he was looking for.

"Better knock him on the head," said a tall, brutal man.

"No, no, let him go," said the woman. "He is too young and good-looking to die. I didn't bring him in to be slaughtered."

"Chuck him outside, I say," cried Charley, "and make tracks the back way. Here's a sparkler worth a hundred quid for you blokes to divide amongst you."

"Where's my share?" asked the woman.

"There's one for you, Fan; a reg'lar beauty."

"So it is," she cried, eagerly seizing the stone that Champagne Charley gave her.

Two men dragged Dick to the door and threw him out into the street. He fell into Messiter's arms, half-fainting, and looking more dead than alive.

"What's up?" asked Messiter.

"I've been robbed," gasped Dick.

"Lost the diamonds?"

"Yes."

"By Jove, here's a go. What did I tell you?"

"Let's go home. I'll lean on you; perhaps the baron will tell us what to do," said Dick, feebly.

"You'll never speak to strange women again, I should think," remarked Messiter.

Dick shook his head. They returned to their hotel, and told Tregannon what had happened. He was much annoyed, and communicated with the authorities, who made a search for the thieves, but without avail. Nothing could be seen of Charley or his accomplices. It could not be helped. They were unable to stay in Port Elizabeth on the off chance of recovering the stones. The ship in which they had engaged a passage, was to sail in two days. So they put all their traps on board, and embarked. It was a steamer, which was to convey them to England, and though saddened by the loss of the diamonds, they all looked forward with delight to reaching their loved country once more. As soon as the steam was up, and the vessel fairly out at sea, Dick, who had been drinking bottled beer down in the steward's cabin, went on deck. He was soon in conversation with the captain, a portly man, who had a great respect for those who were going home with diamonds in their pockets. Sometimes he had one or two small ones given him.

"Had good luck, sir?" he said to Dick.

"Yes and no, captain," replied Dick.

Captain Bunting stared.

"The fact is," continued Dick, "that my party and I have been very successful, but just before sailing I got robbed in a drinking bar."

"And now you've got nothing to show."

"Not a grain of dust."

"Who robbed you?"

"A wild and daring fellow, a murderer and a thief, to my certain knowledge," said Dick.

Suddenly a man carrying a bucket passed by. Dick looked at him, and he looked at Dick.

"Captain," said Dick, "is that a new hand?"

"Yes, shipped just as we were on the point of starting."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course; he was hard up, and I told him he might work out his passage."

"He is the man who robbed me."

"The devil!" cried Captain Bunting.

"I'll swear he's Champagne Charley; call him up."

"Dick's heart beat wildly."

"Hi! you green hand. Come here," shouted the captain.

Reluctantly the man approached.

"So, Mr. Champagne Charley," said Dick, "I've spotted you at last."

The man glanced defiance at him.

"You didn't expect to find me on board this ship, eh? You thought I should be hunting for you in the town; ain't you precious sold, Charley?"

"I don't know what you mean," said the man.

Dick ran at him, and striking him with his fist, knocked him down.

"That's what I mean, murderer and thief!" he cried.

He knelt on his breast, and began to tear his clothes open, looking for the diamonds.

"I want my property, and I'm going to have it, that's what I mean," answered Dick.

"Leave go," cried Charley.

"I shall have you hanged for the murder of Corker up near New Rush, that's what I mean."

"Get up, will you?"

"Give me the diamonds."

"I ain't got 'em," replied Charley.

"Dick's hand touched something sewn in the lining of the fellow's trousers. He could not mistake the feel of the diamonds. There they were securely hidden between the outside white duck and the lining inside."

"Ha!" cried Dick; "here they are."

The captain approached, and asked Dick if he wanted any assistance.

"Put this man in irons," replied Dick; "I'll hold you harmless."

"By—, you don't," said Charley; "I'm not going to swing, and if I can't have the sparklers, curse me if any one else shall."

He made a prodigious effort, and threw off Dick, who fell sprawling on his back. Then, with the light of madness in his eyes, the desperate ruffian sprang over the ship's side into the sea.

"By Jove," cried Dick, recovering himself, "he's overboard."

"Man over," roared the captain; "ease her—stop her—back astern!"

Instantly those in the engine-room stopped the way of the vessel. Dick eagerly watched the form of Charley. All at once he uttered a cry.

"Look, look! a shark!" he cried.

Darting through the clear water was a huge shark, which had espied his prey. Charley saw it too.

"Help!" he cried, in a frenzy of despair.

The steamer, being backed, was nearing him.

"Lower a boat," shouted the captain.

This was done. Dick was one of the first to jump into it. They neared the floating man, who had no difficulty in keeping himself above water.

"Help! help!" he shrieked; "can't you see the darned shark? Pick me up. I'll come back; hanging's better than—oh! help me!"

There was a slight foaming of the water as the voracious animal dashed straight at its prey. An awful shriek of agony rose from Charley as the shark turned on its back, and opening its huge jaws, made a bite at him.

"Leg gone, by the hookey," said the boatswain.

"Which leg, bo'sun?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"Don't matter much which, I should think."

"It does; it does."

"Right leg, then," answered the boatswain.

"Devil seize that shark and fly away with him," said Dick, in a tone of vexation.

"What for?"

"He stole my diamonds, and sewed them in his trousers of his right leg, and now they're gone forever in the shark's belly."

They picked up the wounded man, who had tinged the sea with his fast-flowing blood. It was clear he could not live much longer.

"Why didn't that humbugging shark take the other leg?" he said.

"The brute might have had the whole body if he'd only left the breeches," remarked Messiter.

"That's a 'cute shark," said Tregannon. "He knows his way about."

"By George, I'm that wild," replied Dick, "I could cut my ears off and throw them to a dog."

The man who had just been relieved at the wheel passed them, and stopping before Dick, said: "There's a shark following the ship, sir."

"What sort of a shark?"

"Oh! a good big one."

"Let's ask the captain if we may try to catch him," said Messiter.

"Oh, yes, he'll have no objection," replied Tregannon; "I'll go and speak to him."

Captain Bunting willingly acceded to the request, and a hook was baited with a piece of pork. The engines were slowed, and the strong line thrown overboard. The shark at once seized the bait. A dozen men hauled in the rope, and the animal was brought on deck. He was despatched with a hatchet.

"Cut him open," said Tregannon, "and let's see if he's got anything inside him."

"Not much, I think, sir," replied the boatswain; "he looks uncommon lean and hungry."

Knives being procured, his belly was opened, and, to the surprise of every one, a leg of a man was discovered. Dick seized it eagerly.

"This is wonderful," he cried. "It's Champagne Charley's leg, and here are my diamonds. Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" rejoined Messiter.

The men took up the cheer and the shouts redoubled when Dick ripped up the lining and the diamonds fell on the deck. Only a few of the smaller ones had been taken away. Charley had reserved the bulk of the property for himself, and was going to England to enjoy his ill-gotten spoil. Dick promised the sailors fifty pounds between them on their arrival in London.

He gave the captain a diamond, and became the most popular man aboard.

"My luck's in again," he said, delightedly. "Who'd have thought that we should have caught the identical shark that snapped off that scoundrel Charley's leg?"

He carefully put the diamonds away, and never parted with them day or night. At length the ship, after a prosperous voyage, ran up the Thames, and landed Dick, Messiter and Tregannon at Gravesend. Tregannon took leave of his young friends, having to go to London to claim his title and estates. He promised to come down to Dick's father in a few days. So Dick and Messiter took the train to South Coast, and as the evening fell, were at the rectory. It would be difficult to describe the joy with which they were received. Messiter stayed that night at the rector's, and the next day went to his friends, Dick having given him half a dozen splendid diamonds.

Dick's sister telegraphed to Henrietta that the Scapegrace had come back, and invited her to come and stay with them. The invitation was accepted. Mr. and Mrs. Lighthouse were so pleased to see their son again, that they freely forgave him all the trouble he had caused them. Dick gave away diamonds right and left. But he kept the biggest one of all for Henrietta. His old schoolmaster came over from Brighton to see him. His adventures were listened to with wrapt attention.

"What a man he's grown," said Mrs. Lighthouse, admiringly.

"I hope his good qualities have grown in proportion to his body," remarked Mr. Lighthouse.

Henrietta had grown a tall, handsome girl, and she was overjoyed to see her sweetheart again, and to find that in all his wanderings he had not forgotten her. When he gave her the diamond, she said:

"Oh! Dick, what a beauty."

"Take care of it, darling," said Dick, "it's worth a lump of money, and it will do to start in life, when we're married."

The Rev. Mr. Lighthouse overheard this remark.

"Married!" he said, "who is talking of marriage?"

Dick turned round and saw his father.

CHAPTER XLVI.

CONCLUSION.

In another year, father, we shall be big enough," said Dick, "to get married."

"Don't talk nonsense, sir," said his father, "you will have to work."

"What for?"

"Because I say so. You have had enough play, and I mean to put you in the city."

"I didn't bargain for that," said Dick, looking rather sheepish.

"My dear boy," continued Mr. Lighthouse, "what I say is for your own good, you are only seventeen."

"Isn't that old enough to marry?" asked Dick.

"No. I will not give my consent until you are of age."

"Henrietta is a little older, and she is willing to be my wife," said Dick.

He put his arm round her waist, and looked up lovingly in her face.

"Miss Henrietta's father and I are in perfect accord in this matter; by all means engage yourselves, but you must not think of marrying for some time."

"I might as well have stopped in Africa," said Dick.

"On the contrary, you are better here."

"I can't see it."

"You must strive to make yourself a respectable citizen, and forget all your vagabondizing, and show yourself to be a worthy member of the community."

"Perhaps your papa is right, Dick, dearest," said Henrietta.

"I don't know so much about that."

"We shall often see one another, and we can write."

"I don't know that I shall like city life," said Dick.

"Have you any ambition?" asked his father.

"For what?"

"To be a great man—say a distinguished member of the church."

"No. I'll never be a parson."

"A barrister, then, perhaps a judge."

"I hate the law."

"A doctor?"

"Can't stand physic."

"A soldier?" said his father.

"I have seen enough of fighting."

"What do you say to a sailor's life? Not that I recommend it."

"I've been mastheaded and flogged and hencooed," exclaimed Dick, with a shake of the head. "No more sea for me."

"A merchant, then, with ships sailing to all parts of the world."

"That's better. Sampson Jack's a merchant. I shouldn't mind that. I like dealing," exclaimed Dick.

"A merchant be it, then. That you shall have some means of getting a living I am determined, for I will have no son of mine brought up to lead an idle life."

"Well, Harry, dear," said Dick, "you must wait, and I must work, I suppose."

He heaved a sigh.

"And work hard, too," said his father. "I will at once see about getting you into an office, and the sooner you get rid of all the impressions your wandering life has given you, the better."

Then it was settled that Dick Lighthouse should go into a merchant's counting house in London and attend strictly to business. Henrietta's good sense saw the folly of two very young people marrying on nothing but a diamond, which would soon be spent in housekeeping expenses and dress. Messiter had also received a lecture from his friends and he was told that he, too, must work.

He asked Mr. Lighthouse if he would try to get him in the same office as Dick.

"I will try," said the parson.

"We shall both be so grateful, sir, if you can manage it," asked Messiter and Dick in the same breath.

Their friend of the diamond diggings soon established his rights. His wicked brother committed suicide directly he heard of his return, such was his terror and remorse.

Lord Tregannon, now a well-dressed and polished gentleman, paid Dick his promised visit. He highly approved of Mr. Lighthouse's plan of making Dick work.

"In me your son has always got a firm and sincere friend," he said, "and no one will be more pleased to see him get on."

"He will succeed, my lord, if he keeps out of scrapes," answered Mr. Lighthouse.

"That's just what I'm afraid I can't do," said Dick, to himself. "I was born to get into scrapes, and I shall be as bad in the city, I'll bet, as I was at school."

A few days after this conversation, the reverend gentleman received a letter from town, informing him that the senior partner in the mercantile firm in which he

proposed to place his son, would run down to Brighton. If the young men could make it convenient to come over, he should be glad to see them.

"This is Mr. Golding, senior," said the parson.

"What is the name of the firm?" asked Dick.

"Golding Brothers. The senior partner is a working-man, and a very strict disciplinarian. The younger one is represented to me as being much easier to deal with."

"I know who I shall like best," exclaimed Dick.

"And I too," said Messiter.

"The Mr. Golding, junior, I presume," exclaimed Mr. Lighthouse, senior, with a smile.

"Exactly," answered Dick. "I never get on well with fellows who want too much kootooing."

"You must remember that he will be your employer, and that to be dismissed from a city firm with a bad character will be your ruin."

"Don't creak," said Dick, "I haven't done anything wrong yet."

"I trust you never will. You ought to have plenty of experience by this time. However, we will say no more about that."

Dick breathed a sigh of relief. He thought he was in for one of his father's lectures, which were as long as a sermon, and not half so interesting.

"If you like to have the dog-cart, James will drive you over to Brighton. Mr. Golding is staying at the Bedford Hotel."

"I don't want James; I'll drive myself," said Dick. "You needn't fear our coming to grief. It looks like being a kid again to have a servant sent to look after us."

Lord Tregannon had returned to town, or he would have accompanied them. The following day saw them start early for Brighton. Putting up the trap at some stables near the Old Steyne, they walked, arm in arm, along Castle Square, and on to the Parade.

"It seems a jolly long time since we were at school here," remarked Messiter.

"And yet," said Dick, "the place is not altered in the least; that is the best of Brighton, it never changes."

"They've built an aquarium, though; let's have a look at it."

"I think we had best go to the hotel, and see old Golding."

Messiter made no objection. They walked up to the hotel, and on inquiring for Mr. Golding, were told that he had just stepped out, but was not expected to be gone more than a quarter of an hour. The young gentlemen could wait in his room if they liked. Agreeing to this, they were shown into a handsome room. The door was closed, and they were left to themselves. Dick walked critically round.

"I say," he said, "he's a bit of a swell, he wears patent leather boots."

"Here's the varnish for them," said Messiter, holding up a bottle.

"Let's apply it inside. What a lark," cried Dick, taking the bottle. He emptied its contents into the boots, and adding a little water out of a flower vase, stirred up the delightful compound with the end of the poker.

"It'll all spurt up when he goes to put them on, and won't he look comical. Oh my!" he exclaimed.

"Holler, boys," cried Messiter, delightedly, "here's another guy. But I say, Dick."

"What?"

"We are going to be good, you know, and not lose our characters on any account."

"Perhaps we shan't be found out."

Finding no more mischief ready to his hand, Dick grew tired of waiting, and began to whistle.

"Let's cut it," he said. "I want to have a look round."

"And come back here?"

"Yes. It's no good waiting for the old buffer."

Accordingly they put on their hats, and, leaving word in the hall that they would return, they once more sought the Parade. One rather lumpy old gentleman, with a cross-looking, commanding sort of face, was stretched on the pebbles near the bathing machines. As Dick passed behind him he touched his hat with his stick, and the wind carried it off towards the sea. The old gentleman sprang up.

Seeing Dick, he said:

"Boy, go and fetch my hat."

"Did you speak to me?"

"Yes, my lad."

"Perhaps you will be more respectful next time. I am not in the habit of being talked to in that way."

The old gentleman's face grew red.

"I want my hat," he exclaimed.

"Then you'd better go and fetch it."

"Come, come, don't be foolish. I shall complain to your employer if you're insolent."

"Haven't got one."

"Come, I'll give you sixpence to get my hat; see, it is on the edge of the waves already. I can't run; I've got a touch of the gout this morning."

"That's more civil," said Dick, "and I don't mind if I do oblige you this once; only—"

"What?" demanded the old gentleman.

"Don't let it happen again."

Dick ran after the hat. As he took it up he scooped a couple of handfuls of fine sand into the crown. Running back, he clapped it on its owner's head.

"There you are, old cock," he said.

"Bother the boy," cried the gentleman. "That's not the way."

He lifted it up, and the sand streamed down over his eyes and into the nape of his neck, from whence it ran down his back, creating a most unpleasant sensation. He felt as if he had just had his hair cut.

"Confound the young rascal! Pish! splutter! pish! I've got my mouth full of sand. Deuce take him!" he exclaimed. "I'll thrash him! I'll cane him within an inch of his life."

"You've got to spell 'able' first," answered Dick; "and his will teach you to be more civil in the future, you old-bully."

The gentlemen foamed at the mouth with rage, but the boys walked coolly away, and he could not do anything to them.

They had not gone far before a man dressed in a suit of shepherd's plaid, and smoking a big cigar, stopped before them, with his hands in his pockets. Jerking his finger in the direction of the old gentleman, he exclaimed:

"What's up. Got a fit?"

An idea struck Dick.

"No," he answered, in a whisper. "I recognized him."

"What?"

"Don't howl," replied Dick. "I tell you I twigged him, but I don't want to make a song about it."

It happened that a few days before an elderly man of high respectability had been tried and acquitted for a most atrocious murder. Public opinion ran very strongly against the old man of high respectability, and it was pretty generally believed that he had foully murdered a young girl under shocking circumstances. The name of the accused was Verinder Hutchins. The trial was even then in every one's mouth, and the public felt very strongly against the accused, who was said to have got off by the skill of his counsel and the skin of his teeth.

"Who do you mean?" asked the stranger.

Dick's mysterious manner impressed him very much. "You won't blab?" asked Dick.

"May I be everlastingly blessed if—"

"That'll do. It's Verinder Hutchins, the Melham murderer."

"Nonsense!"

"It is. I was on the prosecution. I am a lawyer's clerk, and was in court all day. I tell you it's Verinder Hutchins, who killed the girl, and got off because he's got lots of coin."

"Thank you," said the stranger.

Dick and Messiter strolled on a little further. They saw the man in the check suit talk to several others. The fact was he had come down from London for the day, with a number of others, to see Brighton, and have a look at the octopus in the aquarium. He told his friends about Verinder Hutchins. They crowded round the old gentleman and stared at him. Presently murmurs arose. Hisses followed.

"Oh, the brute! the wretch! to murder the poor girl," said the female portion of the excursionists.

"I'd like to lynch the fellow," exclaimed one of the men.

The old gentleman, seeing that he was the center of observation for a noisy crowd, looked up.

"He's got murder in his heyces," said a woman.

"Look at his bloodthirsty mouth. I never saw such lips," remarked another.

"The willin'!" observed a third excursionist, with a vengeful shutting of the hands, "I should like to limb him."

Dick kept the background, but he was not idle.

"If he is a murderer," he said, "remember the jury did not find him guilty."

"Never mind, he did it," replied the man.

"Don't throw stones at him," cried Dick.

The hint was acted upon. A shower of stones fell upon the old gentleman, who pale with fear and rage rose from the beach, and hobbled away with the aid of a stick. Fortunately the victim of the practical joke saw a policeman.

"Hi, constable," he said.

"What is it, sir?"

"Protect me from this mob, and ask them what they mean by their conduct. Look at my eye. It has been struck by a stone. I am sore all over. Hark at their yells. There must be some awful mistake. Do they take me for the member for the borough?"

The constable approached the man in the plaid suit.

"What's all this 'ere?" asked the officer.

"What is it? Why, its murder?"

"Murder?"

"Yes, that old bloke's Verinder Hutchins, who got off for killing the girl."

"Who told you so?"

"That young chap over there," said the man in the plaid suit.

The constable returned to the gentleman, and related what he had been told.

"Are you Verinder Hutchins, the supposed murderer," he asked.

"God bless the man, no," cried the gentleman in astonishment. "It must be the mischief of that youth. I see him dodging behind a bathing-machine."

"Better get back to your hotel, sir," said the constable.

"I will. Keep the mob back, and I will reward you if you come to the 'Bedford' and ask for—"

The name was inaudible, and the crowd began to yell again furiously. The constable assured the crowd that they were mistaken, and caused them to remain where they were, while their victim went across the road, and entered the hotel.

"What a lark," said Dick. "We've had it out of the old boy."

"Serve him right for his cheek," said Messiter.

"Now for Mr. Golding. I'm peckish, and perhaps he'll ask us to lunch."

"He will if he's a good sort," answered Messiter.

They leisurely walked to the "Bedford," and went to the room where they had waited for the great merchant. The door was open. A great uproar was proceeding from within, and the bell was being violently pulled.

"You scoundrels!" cried an angry voice, "what have you done? I shall be poisoned. I'm smothered, ugh! ugh! Bah! devil take you all. Hi! help, hi!"

The boys looked into the room. An elderly gentleman was standing with a boot half on and half off.

A black, slimy, sticky fluid had come out of the boat and splashed all over him. His face was spotted and smeared with it, and it ran down his fat cheeks in an inky stream, on to his shirt collar and front. Old Golding had changed his boots. Dick and Messiter entered the room with a couple of servants, who, by the aid of soap, water, and a towel, enabled him to see a little. His eyes fell upon Dick and his friend. The recognition was mutual. In Mr. Golding they saw the object of their morning's persecution upon the beach.

"Slope, Harry," exclaimed Dick; "we must cut our stick."

"Right. We've put our foot in it," added Messiter.

Hastily leaving the room, they went to the stables, and getting out their trap, drove home. Their hope was that Mr. Golding would not find out who they were. In this expectation they were greatly mistaken. The merchant's first question to the servant was:

"Who were those boys?"

"Two young gentlemen from Hayward's Heath to see you sir," was the reply.

"Their names?"

"Mr. Lighthouse and Mr. Messiter," replied the servant.

"Order me a carriage to go to Hayward's Heath," he said.

Meanwhile the lads reached the rectory.

"Well," said Mr. Lighthouse, "seen your future governor?"

"Oh, yes," said Dick, promptly.

"What do you think of him?"

"Nice sort of man. Very."

Wishing to avoid a long conversation, the boys recollected an engagement they had to play a game of cricket. While in the midst of this interesting game, a servant came down.

"You're wanted, Master Richard," he said.

"Who by?"

"Mr. Verinder Hutchins has come over from Brighton."

The bat dropped from Dick's hand.

"Scissors!" he ejaculated, "that ball's taken my middle wicket, and I'm bowled out as clean as a whistle."

Dick sought the house, and hearing voices in the drawing room, stopped to listen.

"I tell you, sir, the young imp filled my ears and mouth and back with small sand; he had me hooted and chased for a supposed murderer, and he nearly blinded me with a foisted mixture he put in my boots, said a voice."

"Very sorry to hear it, I'm sure," replied Mr. Lighthouse.

"Sir," cried the voice of Mr. Golding, "that boy of yours will come to a bad end."

"I sincerely trust not, sir."

"But I say he will, sir."

Dick pushed open the door, and entered, looking very penitent.

"Here he is," cried the merchant.

"Mr. Golding," began Dick.

"You young rascal!"

"Will you hear me? I did not know it was you when I sanded your nut."

"Did what, sir?" roared Mr. Golding, excitedly.

"When I put the sand in your goss," answered Dick.

"Eh?"

"In your hat, I mean, nor do I know who you were when I put the vulgarians on you as Verinder, and I beg to apologize."

"How about the blacking in my boots?" asked Mr. Golding, triumphantly.

"Oh, as to the varnish in the crabb shells, that was an oversight. I can't say more than I'm very sorry, and it shan't occur again. You riled me at first by telling me to pick up your hat, as if I was a beggar."

"Forgive him this time, sir," said Mr. Lighthouse.

"Well, well; say no more about it; there is my hand," replied the merchant, who was a good-hearted man, after all.

"Thank you," said Dick, grasping it warmly.

"But," cried Mr. Golding, "when you come into the city I'll dismiss you at a day's notice if I catch you at any of your pranks."

Mr. Golding stopped to dinner, and over the port laughed heartily at Dick's jokes.

As for Dick, he told Messiter that he considered they were very well out of the mess.

We now conclude the adventures of Dick Lighthouse Around the World.

We must leave Dick Lighthouse to go up to London, and start in the world of commerce with his friend Messiter.

In our next number we shall commence our volatile young hero's extraordinary adventures in the great City of London, and those who have followed his course so far, will, we trust, be happy to continue his acquaintance.

THE END.

For the continuation of this story, see DICK LIGHTHEART IN LONDON.